STORIES FROM OLD ITALIAN ROMANCE

SELECTED AND RETOLD BY

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AND "HOME AND STATE"

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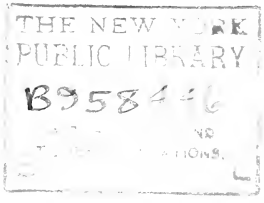

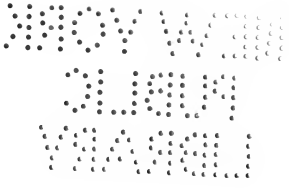

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THE HUNDRED ANCIENT TALES

THE oldest Italian stories belong to a wonderful collection of the thirteenth century known as the "Hundred Ancient Tales." The compiler had gathered them together from many sources and claimed for them an honourable antiquity, though some belonged to nearly his own times. Amongst them were many of the old favourites told by wandering minstrels in castle halls and around camp fires, stories belonging to the days of oral, not written literature. Alexander and Hector, Aristotle and Cato, Narcissus and Pythagoras, and Tristan and Lancelot were among the heroes, and the Lady of Shalott, known to British children in Tennyson's verse, was amongst the tragic heroines. There were stories, too, from Bible history: Balaam and Samson, David and Solomon, and the Three Kings who visited the manger at Bethlehem. But also there were tales of people of quite recent times, of Saladin and the Emperor Frederick II, of Ezzelino the Tyrant and King Conrad, of King Henry II of England and his gallant sons and their daring friend and companion, Count Bertrand de Born.

The first six stories in this book are taken from this old collection.

THE FIRST STORY

THE LEARNED GREEK PRISONER

A POWERFUL King of Greece in old time ruled over much territory and exacted instant obedience from all his subjects. He had imprisoned for some years a great scholar who had offended him, a man whose wisdom was reported as exceeding that of any other man in the realm. One day the King received a gift of a fine horse from a fellow-monarch, the King of Spain. It was magnificent to look upon; handsome in form, distinguished in colour, and of rare breed.

His Majesty, desiring to be exactly informed as to its worth, sent for his smith and asked his opinion of the qualities of the steed. The smith declared himself unable to speak confidently, and advised the King to consult his Greek prisoner, who was reported to be a man learned in all forms of knowledge. So the King had the horse led into a meadow, and ordered the learned prisoner to be brought there to behold it. Then he said, "Master, your great knowledge has been favourably reported to me; let me know your opinion of this horse." The Greek examined the animal carefully and replied, "Sire, this horse is a truly fine courser, but he has been nurtured on asses' milk."

Much struck with this observation, the King dispatched messengers to Spain to inquire exactly into the bringing-up of the horse. They returned, bearing word that its mother had died soon after it was born, and that it had been reared with a young ass. The King was greatly astonished to find the prisoner's opinion thus justified, and ordered that in future he should be given half a loaf of bread a day in his prison, at the royal expense.

Some time afterwards he was inspecting his treasures and the rare jewels belonging to him and desired to be

assured as to which gem was the most valuable. So he bethought him of the learned Greek prisoner, and had him brought before him. "Master, I understand that your learning is great and that you know all things. Tell me whether you can determine the virtues of these precious stones, and which is the most valuable." The prisoner said, "Sire, which do you yourself consider the most valuable one?" The King took up a beautiful glowing stone and said, "This seems to me to be the finest and of the highest value." The Greek took it into his hand, pressed it closely, and then put it to his ear, saying, "Sire, this stone is indeed valuable, but it appears to have within it a living worm." The King sent forthwith for his lapidary and commanded him to break the stone. This he did, and there was found the tiny creature. This convinced the monarch that the Greek was indeed marvellously wise, and he cast about in his mind how to reward him. He decided to order that in future he should receive a whole loaf of bread a day in the prison, at the royal expense.

Before very long a rumour reached the King's ears of evil report which cast doubt on his right to the throne. It was suggested that he was not really the son of the late sovereign, and he was keenly desirous to ascertain the truth. Once again he had the learned Greek prisoner brought into his presence, and announced to him, "Master, I hold you in high esteem as a man of great penetration. Your answers to my questions have given me much satisfaction, and I have to-day a more important one still to ask. Whose son am I?" The Greek, greatly astonished, replied, "Sire, how strange a question! You are well aware you are the son of your honoured predecessor on the throne." But the King, doubtful and displeased, said, "Do not dare to evade my question. Unless you tell me the truth, readily and completely, you shall be put to death as a traitor."—"Then, sire," replied the prisoner, "I must reveal to you that you are the son of a baker."

The King, in fear and anger, sent for the Queen-mother, and questioned her closely under threats of severe punishment if anything were concealed; and she at length confessed that he was not the son of the late King. The royal infant having died just after birth, another baby, the son of a baker, was put in his place to allay anxiety and maintain the succession. Once again he sent for the Greek, and addressed him thus: "Master, you have given me many striking proofs of your wisdom, and now I ask you to tell me how you obtained the knowledge each time." Then the Greek replied, "Sire, I will inform you willingly. With respect to the horse, I knew he had been nourished on asses' milk because he hung his ears, which is not natural to a horse. As to the precious stone, I felt that it was warm; and as for a stone to be warm is contrary to nature, I knew that some living animal must be within." The King sat pondering, and then said, "But how did you discover that I was the son of a baker?"—"That," said the Greek, "I suspected from the first. For when I told you the strange circumstance about the horse you rewarded me with half a loaf a day; then, when I discovered the worm, you ordered me a whole loaf. This convinced me; for if you had really been a king's son you would have given me a city, as my wisdom deserved. But in your gifts your origin betrayed itself, and you were content to give me a loaf a day, as your father would have done."

The King, amazed and mortified by the prisoner's perception and daring, saw the meanness of his actions as it presented itself to his captive, and, conscience-stricken, liberated him at once and loaded him with estates and gifts.

THE SECOND STORY

THE FINE LIBERALITY AND COURTESY OF THE "YOUNG KING"

PRINCE HENRY, the eldest son of the great monarch, King Henry II of England, was crowned king during his royal father's lifetime. This was to make sure that he might succeed to the realm of England and the Dukedom of Aquitaine, Maine, and Anjou at his father's death. But he was impatient to become king in reality as well as king in name; and thereto he was incited by his great friend and chosen companion, Count Bertrand de Born, Sieur of Altafort in Old Guienne. This warrior knight, who was at once a bold fighter and a gay troubadour, perpetually encouraged Prince Henry and his brothers to claim their future dominions and exercise authority therein. He had a ready wit and a sharp tongue, wherewith he would set his neighbour barons quarrelling together and then taunt them for their losses. Ever after Prince Henry's coronation Bertrand insisted on speaking of him as the "Young King," and further nicknamed him "Sailor Boy," on account of his frequent voyages to England. When his younger brothers, Richard, Geoffrey, and John, should have done homage to him as their feudal lord, he alternately supported the "Young King" and stirred the others to discontent. He teased Geoffrey as "Rassa," the joke of which we know not; Richard he called "Richard Yea-and-Nay"; and the spoilt John, the youngest, he tormented by the epithet "Lackland." As all men know, even when the great King made Prince John Lord of Ireland, the contemptuous nickname still clung to him, as indeed it did when, many years later, he became King of England.

Count Bertrand de Born was the constant companion of the young Princes, whom he encouraged in warlike and knightly exercises, and kept in a continual state of fretting

and chafing against authority by his jests and taunts. But Prince Henry it was to whom he was most devoted; and many stories have gathered round the name of the "Young King" which seem to show him of a gallant and generous temper. In his feudal castle in Aquitaine he kept great state and held a court in imitation of his father and the King of France; and thither flocked nobles and travellers to share in his entertainments and to behold his costly surroundings.

One day a poor gentleman, who held very impoverished estates and could ill afford to visit at magnificent courts, coveted a rich, beautifully embossed silver cover on the banqueting table. He thought painfully to himself, "If I could only obtain possession of that my poor family would suffer want no more. It would suffice to make me rich for years"; and yielding to the temptation, when he thought no one was looking, he thrust it under his vest. The "Young King" had beheld the theft, but felt sorry for a knight so tempted and fallen, and said nothing. The banquet proceeded and the guests went to rest; but the next morning the steward announced the loss and ordered that all guests passing out should be searched. The miserable noble knew not what to do, and waited in the throng in the courtyard, where the "Young King," beholding him, went as though giving a cheerful greeting, and then whispered, "Slip it under my coat. They will hardly search me as I pass out to the hunt." The wretched chevalier did so, and when he had undergone the examination at the porter's gate, found himself again near Prince Henry's retinue. The "Young King" sent messengers to bring him to his presence, and dismissing all the attendants, greeted him kindly and presented him with the silver cover and also the massive dish to which it belonged.

On another occasion, after a prolonged festivity, many of the poorer chevaliers, who wasted all their substance in copying the lives and adventures of the few rich seigneurs,

bethought them to carry away some handsome trifle from the "Young King's" castle. When they had taken many valuables in the way of armour, weapons, gloves, and silver vessels, they approached the side chamber beyond the dais where their master lay asleep. One knight had the temerity to seize a rich embroidered rug from off the foot of the King's couch, but the King, who awaked at the moment, held it fast. Thinking it had caught in the framework, he pulled the harder, and some of his companions came to assist him. The "Young King," raising himself on his couch, cried out, half laughing, "Nay, friends! this is not only theft, it is assault and robbery by force! As for the rest—I give them to you; it shall not be said that you stole my trifles."

Startled and abashed, the cowardly and ungrateful chevaliers rushed from the room, dropping and leaving behind the treasures with which they had so unworthily loaded themselves.

The "Young King's" easy-going liberality was not at all to the taste of his royal father, whose orderly mind rejected the loose and careless manner of life of the daring feudal nobles of the time. One day he sternly reproached his son, saying, "Thou spendthrift! soon thou wilt have nothing left. Where dost keep thy few treasures?" The Prince replied, "Pardon me, my liege; with your leave I will show you more treasures than Your Majesty possesses." His father angrily repudiated this, and hot arguments ensued; after which both parties agreed to fix a certain day for the exhibition of their wealth and magnificence.

Prince Henry, with the counsel of his bosom friend, Bertrand de Born, invited all the young nobility, who delighted to serve him, to be present on a certain day to help him to entertain and impress his royal father. They were to come armed, and to be prepared for whatever exercises of daring might turn up. With his father the "Young King" arranged that a certain tent should be set

aside, in which, duly enshrined and guarded, the King might display his treasures and then demand to see those of his son. On the appointed day the young nobles assembled in brilliant attire; a splendid pavilion decorated with jewels, hung with cloth of gold, and with rich carpets on the ground, was given up to King Henry, and surrounded with a band of mailed and armed chevaliers. Stewards and seneschals and secretaries and armourers, with a cavalcade of wagons and beasts of burden, unloaded there the glittering treasures of Henry King of England, Duke of Aquitaine.

His Majesty stood watching the dazzling array, and when all was placed, turned to his son triumphantly, "Now let us see your wealth, my son!" The "Young King" bowed and drew his sword from its sheath, waving it on high. This was the signal to his followers, and immediately hundreds of swords flashed, and the treasure pavilion was surrounded with an army of plunderers, who seized the valuables, the tent cloths, the carpets even, until nothing remained. The "Young King," standing beside his father, called out, "Make the best of the booty you have won!" and the bandit-knights rushed away with their plunder.

King Henry, determined to avenge both his loss and the insult put upon him, went to war with his son, who retired to Bertrand de Born's castle of Altafort, and was there besieged by his father with a large force. He assisted his host in all the devices for making the castle secure and impregnable; toiled and worked with the strongest and lowliest, now on the high battlements, now on the spikes of the drawbridge, thinking nothing of danger and exposing himself to the enemy a dozen times a day. At length he was wounded in the head with an arrow, and was carried into his chamber bleeding sorely. Rumours of the gallant resistance made by the besiegers had spread far and wide, and the ill tidings of the "Young King's" danger were known to all the country round.

Then there gathered together his creditors, who were many, from all parts of the dukedom, and they petitioned payment of the many sums lent, or advanced, to him at various times.

King Henry, grieved at the news of his son's approaching death, raised the siege and withdrew, and the "Young King" sent to him messengers asking him to come and pardon him ere he died. But the great King's heart was too sore to permit him to be completely reconciled with his rebellious son; however, he sent him a ring in token of peace. Then as he lay dying, with the ring in his hand, he ordered that the creditors demanding an audience should be admitted to his bedside. To each who humbly urged his claim the "Young King" replied, "I am sorry, sir, but you come the *day after the fair*. The money you lent me is all spent, and all the fine things you provided me with I have given away. My body is so very sick that it is worthless to offer you as a pledge; but if my soul will be of any service to you, you are very welcome. Suppose you send for a clerk at once, and let us see what we can do."

So a notary was fetched and commanded in these words: "Write, Mr. Attorney, and write quickly, lest it be too late: 'I, Prince Henry of England and Aquitaine, being sound in mind but grievously sick in body, do will and bequeath my soul to perpetual purgatory until all my creditors, of all sums, shall be paid and satisfied.'" Dismayed and affected, the band of creditors left the chamber, and soon afterwards the "Young King" died. They then sought King Henry and presented their petition for payment to him. But he flew into a violent passion, and charged them with supplying the Prince with arms and munitions to rebel against his royal father; and charged them that, not only would he not pay a single claim, but also that they should speedily quit his dominions in whatever part, under pain of forfeiture of their goods and their persons. At this, one of the creditors, who felt that nothing

worse was to be feared than what he had already incurred, ventured to observe to the angry King, "But, sire, we shall not be the losers in the end, for we have your royal son's soul in prison for his debts." The King, frowning darkly, said, "And what is this? What is it that you think you have done with your cunning?" They then handed His Majesty a copy of the Prince's will, and he took it away into his private chamber to consult his chaplains and chancellors.

Then he returned to the audience-hall and, much moved in spirit, declared to the waiting creditors that it was not the will of Heaven that the soul of so brave a prince should remain in purgatory for his earthly debts, and that he would himself royally discharge them. Which he did, to the great satisfaction of the many merchants and others who had lent moneys to the "Young King." Because of this fatherly and generous action there came Bertrand de Born to King Henry to make his submission. Now he had loved his friend the "Young King" very deeply and tenderly, and in his death he felt that he had lost a part of himself. So he came into the royal presence humbly and dejected, no more wearing a defiant and nonchalant air; and behind him came his troops of men-at-arms, silent and grave. Then said King Henry, "So, Sir Count, I think you are the man who said you had enough sense to match all the rest of the world?"—"Why, yes, sire," said Bertrand, "it was so." And the King, "Well, show me——"—"Alas! my liege," replied Bertrand, "but I have since lost it—all."—"When was that, pray?" inquired the King. And Count Bertrand, looking upon him, said, "Alas! and alas! sire, when your noble son, the 'Young King,' died, I lost it all; and I lost, too, everything I care for in the world."

This evidence of affection for his dead son, albeit he had been unruly and rebellious in his life, so moved the great King that he forthwith pardoned Bertrand de Born and sent to him heavy payments to restore the cost of the

late war and the siege of his castle. And thereto he added further lands, and acknowledged Bertrand as his loyal vassal.

THE THIRD STORY

THE GOOD KING MELIADUS AND THE KNIGHT WITHOUT FEAR

THE Good King Meliadus, father of the famous Tristan, had a sworn foe in the Knight without Fear. Wherever gallant deeds were doing these two were in bitter rivalry, and their followers cared so greatly about the reputations of their leaders that they too were prepared to test in battle the claim to serve the better knight. Now it so happened that one day the Knight without Fear had set out upon some affair of chivalry, and had disguised himself so that he should be on exactly level terms in the field, nor awe his antagonist by reason of his astounding reputation. Behind him there followed but one page, and he was clad in white with no coat-of-arms visible. Now there were, loitering on the road, some of the Squires of his own estates, idly looking for an adventure and desiring much that their master would bid them rouse for some chivalrous adventure where they might win glory. As the disguised Knight, their master, approached, seated on his roan mare and bearing lance and sword, yet showing no insignia that they knew, they bethought them of a rough test to apply to the traveller ere letting him go his way. So they stopped him and said, "Sir Knight, ere thou goest farther, thou shalt tell us, on thy chivalry, which is the better knight, the Knight without Fear or the King Meliadus."

The rider hardly permitted himself any moment for thought before he replied, "Good Squires—so may Heaven grant me fair adventure—the Good King is, I think, the best knight that ever pressed a steed." The Squires, who boasted of their pride in their master's prowess and spoke

scornfully of the Good King Meliadus, here fell upon the traveller-knight, and pulling him from his horse made him prisoner, declaring that they would punish him for his evil words. They mounted him upon a poor palfrey, and one of themselves rode his beautiful steed. As they went along, jesting and threatening, they talked loudly of hanging the wretched knight who had thus contemned the prowess of their master.

Presently they met an armed Knight evidently riding in search of adventure. He, too, bore no cognizance and was attended by a single page in unadorned black. As he came near he called out, "Gentlemen, why are you using this gentleman so vilely? What has he done that you should desire to hang him?" They replied, "We would hang him because he well deserves hanging. Never was such a despicable knight. If you knew you would yourself hang him at once. Ask him what he has said and you shall hear from his own mouth enough to condemn him." Then the King approached the captive Knight and said to him, "Of what crime have you been guilty that these Squires treat you thus shamefully?" And the Cavalier replied, "I have done nothing but tell the simple truth."—"How?" exclaimed the King; "you must explain. What have you done?" Then the Knight replied, "Sir, I tell you most willingly. I was going on my way in the guise of a simple knight-errant, when these Squires, meeting me, inquired of me on the faith of chivalry whether the Good King Meliadus or the Cavalier without Fear were the better knight. Always desirous that truth should prevail, I declared that the King Meliadus was the best; in which I meant to speak the truth, although that same King is one of the bitterest enemies I have in the field. I bear him the deepest hatred and defiance, yet would I not dishonour him by lying as to his skill in knightly things. This is the whole of my offence, and for this I am punished as you see."

Then King Meliadus fell upon the wondering Squires,

and with many blows of his sword smote them and scattered them in all directions. Then he unbound the captive Knight and mounted him upon his own charger, and led him on some way where they came upon a great retinue. Here the King commanded that a splendid steed should be prepared and brought to him, and mounting him thereon the King requested him to keep covered for the present the arms on the housings. Then the Knight went his way and the King resumed his journey; and on reaching his castle the Knight lifted the covering and beheld the embroidered arms of King Meliadus. Whereupon he assured himself that what he had said was indeed true, for King Meliadus had rescued and preserved him, although he was his mortal enemy.

THE FOURTH STORY

KING RICHARD OF THE LION HEART AND THE SARACENS

RICHARD, Count of Poitou, the second son of the illustrious King Henry II of England, was, even as a youth, possessed with a strong desire to win back the Holy Land to Christendom. He had adventured in the great Crusade undertaken whilst his father still reigned, and when, through the death of his elder brother, Henry, he became King of England, he led the Christian armies. The troubadour-baron, Count Bertrand de Born, a feudal vassal of King Henry, was the chosen friend and companion of the four young Princes, and years before had dubbed Count Richard "Dick Ay-and-No," for his simple, unflinching courage. His daring in war, and his brave endurance of wounds and hardship, won for him the prouder title of Lion-Heart; and all Europe admired and loved him as the fine flower of chivalrous warriors.

So that when he announced his intention of making this attempt to conquer the Sultan, the most valiant knights

and the proudest cavaliers were eager to accompany him. And because they had to go by sea, and because they were on sacred soil, they fought on foot; and at first were scorned by the Paynim chivalry. But when, after the first contest, the Saracens counted up their losses, they found them overwhelming. For King Richard fought as though he were the Archangel Michael himself. The swing of his sword swept the ground clear before him; his enormous stride and defiant cry struck terror into the Paynim hosts; he seemed never to need rest and ever to bear a charmed life. His reputation spread throughout the Islam people, so that his name became a symbol of terror. Mothers and nurses would hush their babies into quietness by whispering, "Be quiet, or King Richard will hear you"; warriors desired to meet him to behold the man who was the very prince of warriors.

In one engagement, as the Sultan beheld the rout of his army, he inquired haughtily, "How many are these Christians who thus deal with my people?" And when assured that they were but King Richard with his axemen and archers, and that the hardest fighting was ever where gathered that little band on foot, he said, "It is a scandal that so bold and skilful a warrior should fight on foot; bear him my noblest charger." So a truce was cried, and with much pomp and glory a magnificent warhorse was led from the Sultan's pavilions to the modest tent of the Crusader King, with the gracious message that the Sultan trusted he should no longer behold so splendid a warrior fight on foot.

King Richard the Wary, not only Lion-Heart but also prudent mind, received the message and cast his eye over the gift. He then commanded one of his squires to mount him and try his paces. A fine horseman approached and vaulted into the saddle. The proud steed curveted and pranced, and his rider found that he but ill obeyed the bit. Presently the astonished host beheld the horse and rider making at full speed for the Sultan's camp, and they gazed

open-mouthed as they realized the peril their leader had escaped. Meanwhile the Sultan advanced from his pavilion, expecting to greet King Richard, whom he had thus hoped to seize as a prisoner, and to his chagrin found only a breathless squire.

King Richard, in spite of his reckless daring in leading the fight in the hottest quarter, escaped all the perils of warfare in the Holy Land, and set sail for his dominions, weary and wounded, it is true, but still undaunted. Many of his host were slain, and many more were sick, so he concluded a truce with the Sultan for three years, frankly warning him that he intended to return and renew the war. To this the magnificent potentate replied that if it were ordained that he was to lose the land, he had rather lose it to Richard than to any other prince he had ever seen. Amidst the lamentations of all the Christians Richard set out, himself nearly weeping at the delay in accomplishing the conquest; and much cast down by tidings of disorders in his realm which his absence had permitted. "O Holy Land!" he cried, as the ships sailed away, "I commend thy people to God! May Heaven grant that I may again come to visit and succour thee!"

His good fortune in war no longer accompanied him by sea, and he was shipwrecked near Aquilia. His valour and his resolution in forming the treaty with the Sultan had aroused the anger and enmity of the European princes who were his allies when the Crusade began, so that he hesitated to ask help from any of the Continental rulers. Disguising himself as a pilgrim, he began his journey on foot towards Germany, hoping thus to reach the shores of France and cross to England in safety. To procure a passport he proclaimed himself a merchant, and asked Count Neinhard to grant him safe-conduct, enclosing a fine ring with a ruby inset as a gift. The Count, on receiving it, exclaimed, "No merchant, but King Richard himself, sends this ring," and he ostentatiously granted him

a passport, whilst returning the ring, intending to have the King captured secretly. He managed to escape, however, only to fall into another peril; for at Vienna his attendant displayed some Syrian gold coins, and suspicion fell on both that they were in some way opposed to Duke Leopold. Soon he was arrested, but declared that he would yield only to the Duke himself. This was granted, and at first he was imprisoned with some consideration; but soon all regard to his rank and character disappeared, and he was confined in a dungeon.

There he consoled himself for his misfortunes by recalling the old troubadour accomplishments of his youth, which he had delighted to practise in company with his brilliant associate, Bertrand de Born. There is still handed down to us the poem he composed after being kept prisoner in the Black Tower for more than a year:—

No wretched captive of his prison speaks,
Unless with pain and bitterness of soul;
Yet consolation from the Muse he seeks,
Whose voice alone misfortune can control.
Where now is each ally? each baron, friend?
Whose face I ne'er beheld without a smile;
Will none, his Sovereign to redeem, expend
The smallest portion of his treasures vile?

Though none may blush that near two tedious years
Without relief my bondage has endured,
Yet know, my English, Norman, Gascon peers,
Not one of you should thus remain immured;
The meanest subject of my wide domains,
Had I been free, a ransom should have found:
I mean not to reproach you with my chains,
Yet still I bear them on a foreign ground.

At length, as the old story goes, his whereabouts was discovered by his faithful minstrel Blondel, who wandered through Germany and Austria hoping to discover his royal master in some fortress. His patience and ingenuity were rewarded one day, for as he sang a *tenson* composed by King Richard and himself, it was recognized by the

imprisoned listener. Gently striking his harp and murmuring the air like a serenade, he sang :—

Your beauty, lady fair,
None views without delight ;
But still so cold an air
No passion can excite :
Yet this I, patient, see
While all are shunned like me.

Then a voice within the fortress wall took up the air, and through the grating floated softly :—

No nymph my heart can wound
If favour she divide,
And smiles on all around
Unwilling to decide :
I'd rather hatred bear
Than love with others share.[1]

After a loving greeting and assurance of speedy help, Blondel hastened back to England, and the heavy ransom was gladly gathered wherewith to buy back the valiant Crusading King to freedom.

THE FIFTH STORY

THE LADY OF SHALOTT AND SIR LANCELOT OF THE LAKE

A DAUGHTER of the great Emperor Frederick Barbarossa beheld at a tournament the gallant bearing and knightly achievements of Sir Lancelot of the Lake. Now he was so called to distinguish him from another Sir Lancelot, and on account of his marvellous childhood. For when he was a babe of but a few months old he was stolen from his father's castle by the enchantress Vivienne, who dwelt in the marshes of Brittany and was called the Lady of the Lake. This enchantress could never be traced and captured by mortal warriors, for so soon as they beheld the gleaming waters near which

[1] Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry.*

she was wont to be seen she seemed to plunge into their depths and disappear. Sir Ban, seeking his little son, beheld the form of a beautiful woman, bearing something in her arms, leap into the lake, and he saw his child no more. But years afterwards, Vivienne presented herself at the court of King Arthur with a young knight in her train, whom she introduced as a true and chivalrous servant. This was the long-lost Lancelot; and he entered into the gracious company of the Round Table, and soon excelled all the other knights in courtly and adventurous deeds.

So that when the Lady of Shalott in due course went down to Camelot for the great jousting feast, small wonder was it that she admired most of all the Cavalier of the Lake. Also his praise was in all men's mouths, and his skill and daring the talk not only of the hall and the camp, but also of the ladies' bowers. And the maids and tire-women related to their mistresses still further marvellous deeds of the knights than those beheld of all, and especially the deeds of Sir Lancelot of the Lake. And amongst these was the tire-woman of the Lady of Shalott, who never wearied of recounting to her mistress the tales she had heard of Sir Lancelot's chivalry. So that the fair Lady returned home to her beautiful castle, sighing for sorrow that so true a knight had but once reverently kissed her hand, and then been seen of her no more. And it was long ere another tournament would come round; and in the meanwhile the knights at Camelot went seeking adventures the wide world through. Especially were the boldest and sagest of them bent on finding and bringing to their beloved master, King Arthur, the sacred Graal.

Now the Lady of Shalott was certain that the gallant Sir Lancelot would undertake this emprise, and she began to weep at the thought that he might never return to Camelot or be seen of her again. For so little store did brave knights set on safety and home and love that they

would risk all, willingly and perpetually, in search of high adventures. And the more she dwelt on his gentle ways and his graceful person and splendid skill, the more she fretted at the thought that even at that moment he might be lying sore hurt and dying in some foreign land or dungeon. Nor could any of her anxious attendants cheer or console her. Her oldest tire-woman, who had been her nurse and loved her tenderly, vainly sought to arouse her from her sadness, but nothing that she could tell had power to comfort the Lady, since she could not say that Sir Lancelot was certainly safe and ere long would come riding along the winding, sunny road to pay his court to her.

But she sat for long hours at her turret window with her tambour-frame untouched beside her, casting longing looks towards the towers and domes of Camelot, and across the golden cornfields and green meadows that lay between. And along the winding road would come gay troops of cavaliers with pennons flying and trumpets sounding; and sedate parties of merchants; and travelling companies of jugglers and tumblers; and troubadours and jongleurs; and many wayfaring folk of all degrees. To all of these the hospitable castle of Shalott was open, and round the hearth of its great hall cheerful gatherings heard and told all the news of court and camp and cloister. But never amongst the cavaliers was Sir Lancelot, and only rumours of his distant exploits were murmured from time to time. So that the Lady of the Castle sat sadly in her bower, nor cared for any of the gaiety of winter indoors or the beauty of summer out of doors. But she pined continually for sorrow that Sir Lancelot, whom she loved when she first beheld him, should remember her not at all, but be quite content to go far away.

Later, as she lived solitary and sad in her castle, rumours reached her that Sir Lancelot had returned to Camelot, unsuccessful in his quest of the Graal, but renowned for his chivalrous adventures. And for a while hope revived in

her heart, and she roused herself to sit again at her turret window and watch the winding road. For, lo! any day she might behold Sir Lancelot speeding along it to ask her hand and vow his service to her for ever. But the summer melted into autumn, and he came not; and the harvest was garnered and the winter storehouses built and shielded from the storms. And when the short November days threw pale lights across the winding road and the gleaming river, the Lady gathered her tire-women about her and charged upon them a solemn duty. And they, weeping much that their fair mistress should desire no longer to live, promised all that she asked. For word had reached her that Sir Lancelot was high in favour with King Arthur, and that the camp resounded with his mirth and gaiety as he excelled in all knightly contests, and was invariably victor in every challenge. Moreover, he had sworn himself squire for ever to the beauteous Guinevere, Arthur's queen, and daily sought out some way of serving her and exalting her name.

Thus the Lady of Shalott, with gentle persistence, so wrought on her women that when one day she bade them a loving farewell, and lay back on her couch with hands meekly folded upon her breast, none disturbed her, and she quietly slept her soul away. And a few days afterwards her dead body was placed upon a rich couch on a gilded barge with heavy decorations, and many precious stones and ornaments set about her pillow. A gold coronet was upon her brow, and she was clothed in her richest robes, and beneath her silver girdle was folded a letter to her beloved. Besides its quiet occupant there was no one on the stately barge; nor had it sail or oars, or trimmed helm; and it was pushed from the bank out into the mid-stream of the river. Then the current and the winds bore the strange craft safely along to Camelot, and there the barge rested itself upon the banks.

There tidings of this reached the assembly of the Round Table, and there came out a vast train of barons and

cavaliers, followed soon by King Arthur himself. They stood mute with astonishment at seeing the strange vessel with no sailor on board, and the splendid canopy showing dimly in the waning afternoon light. The King himself first set foot upon the barge, and he knelt reverently before the beautiful figure arrayed in all the pomp of death. And he beheld the missive in her zone, and gently withdrew it, and unfolded the scroll before his wondering train. There he read: "To all the Knights of the Round Table, greeting, from the poor Lady of Shalott, who invokes long health and fortune for the proudest lances in the world. Do they wish to learn how I am thus fearfully brought before them? Let my last hand witness that it was for the sake of the noblest and hardiest of the cavaliers of the land, the proud knight Lancelot of the Lake. For after many tears you behold me dead, a victim, for loving without return."

And the cavaliers, standing silent upon the bank, marvelled at their great Captain's moved countenance, while one voice murmured, "She has a lovely face; may God have mercy on her soul." This was the knight Lancelot.

THE SIXTH STORY

THE GOOD HERMIT AND THE TREASURE

A GENTLE Hermit was one day walking through a vast forest, and chanced to come upon a cave nearly hidden with the branches and bushes that grew thickly around. Being very weary he entered in and lay down to rest. He fell peacefully asleep, and when he awoke saw, in the dim light, something gleaming in the dim recesses of the cave. Rising, he approached and found a heap of gold pieces scattered on the ground. At once he turned away and fled from the cave, for he had become a Hermit years before only to escape the temptations of riches and luxury. He hastened as fast as he could go through the forest when suddenly, in an open glade, he was set

upon by a band of robbers. These made their abode in the forest and waited beside the tracks to despoil unwary travellers. They soon found that the Hermit carried nothing of value, but requested him to tell them why he was fleeing so fast.

"I flee from Death," he replied; and when they persisted, he would only add, "Death urgeth me sorely from behind." His terror was so real and so great that it infected even the rough bandits, and they cried, "Show us where! Show us where!" The Hermit said, "Follow me, then"; and he retraced his steps towards the cave, which the robbers had never discovered. Entering in, he bade them follow, and when they had assured themselves that it was no trap, they went in and were lost in delighted amazement at the sight of the treasure. The Hermit warned them solemnly that that was the Death from which he fled, and implored them not to touch it; but they laughed him to scorn and hastened to gather up the gold pieces. In their gratitude they permitted the Hermit to go on his way unmolested, jeering at him for his unreasonable terror, and when he had left them the grotto rang with their shouts of mirth at any one fleeing from so desirable a thing.

When they had taken possession of all the gold they began to consider how best to use it. One said, "Since Heaven has sent us such good fortune certainly we must bear it all away from here." But another urged, "Nay; it appears to me that we had far better let the treasure remain here for the greater part, and all except one stay to guard it. And let me take a few pieces, and go to the town to buy wine and viands for all." And to this he won the others, so that it was arranged that he should go to the city, returning as soon as he could, and that the other three should await his return and guard the rest of the gold.

Now his advice had been honest, and on setting out at first he had meant to return faithfully and bring many

good things for himself and his fellows to share. But as he walked along, jingling the handful of gold pieces together and smiling at the pleasant sound, the evil demon who waits to tempt men to sin whispered to him things that poisoned his good intent. So that presently as he went he was murmuring to himself, "As soon as I reach the city I will eat and drink of the best of everything, as much as I please, and purchase *what I want.* This I will mix with the food I carry back to my companions, and that, I trust, will soon settle their account. Then I shall be the master of the treasure, and shall be one of the richest men in this part of the world." And he did as he purposed; eating and drinking with great enjoyment of good viands and wine, and buying some poison afterwards, which he carefully introduced into the food which he carried back.

Meanwhile the three robbers left in the cave had been tempted by their evil demons, and slowly and suspiciously conferred together until they were all agreed that they would fall upon the absent member of the band on his return and kill him, thus securing his share of the booty. "We will kill him the moment he appears, and then enjoy the feast he has brought and divide the treasure." So that when the robber with the purchases came in sight he was met with hostile glances, and the three, running upon him with their daggers, pierced him to the heart and he fell down dead. They then spread out the provisions with which he had been laden, and began to enjoy the wine and the rich foods. But the deadly poison soon took effect, and they lay tortured beside the spoil which not one of them any longer had strength to hold. Then was it left without any claimant, for the Hermit had wisely run from it, and those who coveted it had slain each other in order to possess it. Not often does the judgment of Heaven so signally show the wicked taken in the net which they themselves have spread.

THE ROMANCES OF BOCCACCIO

THE next famous collection of Italian stories, in order of time, are the Tales of Boccaccio. Like our own Chaucer, who threaded together many stories of all times and countries by pretending them to have been told by a party of pilgrims, so the Italian story-teller of the fourteenth century devised a plan for connecting his romances.

The terrible pestilence of the Black Death ravaged the towns of Italy, and many of the rich attempted to escape the danger by fleeing into the country. Giovanni Boccaccio tells us that when the Plague was at its height seven ladies of rank had attended service in the church of Sta. Maria Novella, in Florence, and lingered to admire the beauty of the frescoes. There they were joined by three noble gentlemen, who took refuge in the church from the sad sights of death and mourning in the streets. Relating to the ladies the terrible havoc of the pestilence, the cavaliers begged them to leave the city, and with themselves to take refuge in an inn in the recesses of the country. The proposal was accepted, and, safely arrived there, the party resolved that each should compose, and tell in the most interesting fashion, a story, thus keeping their minds occupied. Their exile lasted ten days, and each told a story every day; whence the collection was called *The Decameron.*

This pleasant fiction was the way in which the gifted novelist gave his stories to the world. We find that he sometimes borrows from old Italian romances, as, for instance, the *Hundred Ancient Tales;* sometimes takes historical works and characters; and sometimes tells quite

original stories. But always his telling is pleasant and pointed; and, indeed, his great skill in moulding words first showed how fine an instrument the Tuscan tongue could be in prose narrative. His great predecessor, Dante, had revealed its capacities for verse, and this perhaps it was which first inspired him to become an "artist in words." He tells us that although he was educated and brought up for commerce, he was never happy until, at the tomb of Virgil, by the second milestone on the road out from Naples, he vowed himself to Literature. Very reluctantly his father gave consent; and we find him presently professor of Greek at Florence, lecturing upon the works of the great Florentine Dante, and encouraged by his friend Petrarch to persist in composing tales. His natural gift was cultivated and broadened by much study, and he held a high position in the brilliant city. Never did he regret forsaking commerce and the law for the pursuit of letters. He wrote: "I well remember that before I was seven years of age, and when I had never seen or known what fictions were, nor had received any instruction from masters, I had already a natural turn for fiction and had produced some trifling tales."

The Decameron,[1] or "Ten Days' Narration of Tales," became a storehouse for later writers. Both novels and plays have been founded upon these old Italian stories by writers of all the European nations.

[1] δέκα, Greek, "ten."

FOUR STORIES FROM BOCCACCIO'S "DECAMERON"

THE FIRST STORY

THE MERCHANT TURNED CORSAIR

THE country bordering on the sea coast of Italy between Reggio and Gaeta has ever been esteemed as the most delightful region, and the part near Salerno, which looks directly upon the sea, known as the coast of Malfi, is full of small towns with gardens and fountains, and abounds in trade and merchandise. One of these pretty, gay towns is called Ravello, and in it are still many rich men. Not long ago there was amongst them a certain wealthy merchant named Landolfo Ruffolo, who was still not content with his gains, but sought to increase them. How, in doing this, he was in danger of losing not only his riches but also his life, shall be told in this tale.

One day, after making many careful calculations, Landolfo purchased a large ship, laded her with a cargo of fine and unusual goods, many of them Italian, but some of Eastern production, and set sail for the Isle of Cyprus. After a fair passage and no adventures he arrived at the port, only to find that his idea had been acted upon by a number of other merchants, and that several ships were in the harbour unloading cargoes similar to his own. Thus he was compelled to sell his goods very cheaply, to his great loss, and was much mortified at the ill success of his enterprise. After some days of angry meditation he resolved that he would risk death rather than return home to Ravello and live in comparative poverty where he had been known in affluence.

So he sold his ship as soon as he could find a purchaser, and with the price and the proceeds of his merchandise he bought a small swift vessel, called a brigantine.

This he fitted and trimmed so that it should be suitable for a pirate ship, and manned it with a crew of desperate men, who asked no questions as to destination and were asked none as to character. Landolfo now cruised about, capturing the merchant vessels that traded between Constantinople and Genoa, especially those belonging to Turks. In this enterprise fortune favoured him exceedingly. He became most skilful in anticipating richly laden vessels and in betraying and boarding them with his men. Then he would secure the most valuable portion of the cargoes. And thus in a year he had made good the unfortunate losses of his venture to Cyprus, and had got greater wealth than he formerly possessed.

Soon he decided that he would give up this adventurous life and return home with his double fortune. Gradually nearing the Malfi coast, he ordered his rowers to put forth their utmost strength, and became each moment more impatient to be safely ashore and rid of his vessel and crew. But a great storm arose and a wind which blew them far out of their course, so that they sought shelter in the harbour of a small island. Whilst Landolfo waited for the tempest to lull, there came two great carracks, or merchant vessels, of Genoa, seeking shelter likewise. These captains, much interested in the grey little brigantine, which now bore her owner's name, convinced themselves that she was laden with spoil, which it would be good to possess. Now, although the merchants of Genoa and Constantinople were, many of them, quite honest adventurers, there were others who interpreted most liberally to themselves the law of the high seas concerning prizes and booty. These captains of the Genoese carracks determined that so neat a little craft was no true trading vessel, and agreed together to seize her as a prize at sea. So they blocked her way with their great bulks, and then, arming their crews, they sent some ashore and some in boats to board the brigantine. So skilfully was this accomplished that Landolfo's crew could make no

effectual resistance, and soon they were all flung overboard.

They spared Landolfo's life, but rifled the vessel of everything, leaving him only his clothes that he wore, and then debated whether to sink him with his ship or to take him aboard. At length they decided to take him on one of the carracks, and thrust him, bound, into the hold, sinking the brigantine where she lay at anchor. Then they set sail for Genoa; but another great storm arose and dashed the carrack in which Landolfo was prisoner against the rocks of the isle of Cephalonia. It was completely wrecked and the rough sea strewn with the merchandise it had carried, its chests and coffers and ship's furniture. Some of the crew attempted to swim ashore, and some clung to spars and other fragments from the wreck. The wretched Landolfo, after being cruelly buffeted by the waves, was able to secure a wooden coffer which drifted near him, and thus to keep himself afloat. And although the day before, as he lay bound in the dark hold, he had wished for death, and had assured himself that he would rather die than live in the poverty to which he was reduced, he now clung fiercely to the one small thing that might save him from drowning. For many hours he tossed on the waves, nearly perishing from cold and hunger, but still bravely keeping his hold on the chest; and the next day the winds blowing strongly on the water he was drifted upon the shore of Corfu.

Here a fisherman's wife saw him being alternately flung high and sucked back by the waves, with the coffer held tightly before him. Leaving her pots and pans, which she was scouring with sand, she courageously entered the waves and dragged the wretched Landolfo up the beach beyond the tide. Then calling her daughter to her aid, with difficulty she unclasped his stiffened arms, and they carried the exhausted man to her cottage. The daughter was sent back to the beach for the chest, and bore it home upon her head. So that when Landolfo regained conscious-

ness he found himself in a warm room, with kindly faces near, the sodden chest in sight, and bustling women feeding him with hot broth and spiced wine.

By degrees his strength returned to him, and he sought to reward the women who had thus befriended him. The coffer seemed so light that it was useless to hope that it contained anything of value, and dejectedly Landolfo forced it open one day when he was left in the cottage alone. To his surprise and delight he found it most neatly packed in numberless interstices with jewels and precious stones, some being set in ancient fittings and some unset and uncut. His experience as merchant told him that they were of great value; and he became much comforted and thanked God for His mercies. He then pondered much upon how to reach his home in safety with this booty, and hoped earnestly that a third misfortune might not come to him.

Presently he told the good woman that he must now thank her for her kindness and seek his way home. He asked her to accept the coffer which had, under God and with her help, been the means of saving his life, assuring her he had no further use for it. Secreting the jewels and precious stones upon his person, and casting a sack for protection across his shoulders, he took a grateful leave of his benefactors and set out for the harbour. There he found a ship about to sail for Branditio, and went aboard, presently reaching Tranium, where the merchants of the port generously bestowed upon him good garments when they heard the tale of his misfortunes. He kept silent, however, as to his treasures, and some time later reached Ravello in safety. Then he fell on his knees and thanked God for bringing him home after so many perils, alive and not in dire poverty. On examining the jewels and stones, he found that they were far more valuable than he had at first believed, and that by selling them at reasonable prices he would be at least three times as rich as when he embarked all his capital in the ill-fated merchandise for Cyprus.

When he had sold them all he sent a large sum of money to the good woman at Corfu, charging her to apprentice her son and to give her daughter a dowry. He also dispatched handsome gifts to the merchants at Tranium, who had helped him; and then settled down to live in comfort and happiness away from all adventures in future. He was much esteemed where he lived for his sagacity and generosity, and ended his days in Ravello full of wealth and honour.

THE SECOND STORY

THE SEARCH FOR THE HELIOTROPE

THERE once dwelt in the city of Florence, a place famous for the variety of character of its citizens, a painter named Calandrino, a man of extreme simplicity and fond of novelties. His chief companions in his work and amusements were two brother painters, known as Bruno and Buffalmacco. These men were very different from Calandrino, being both humorous and satirical, often at the expense of their friend, who suspected nothing in their remarks and grim chuckles. At the same time there was living in Florence a young man of leisure, named Maso del Saggio, a cultivated and engaging youth, full of sprightliness and wit. Hearing of Calandrino and his ingenuous sayings he demanded some occasion of meeting him; and finding him one day in the Church of S. John, occupied in admiring the frescoes, he and a friend seated themselves near and began conversing upon the merits of some rare form of decoration with jewels, thence passing on to the subject of precious stones.

Soon the attention of Calandrino was diverted from the ornaments to the conversation behind him; and he was much impressed with the air of acquaintance and mastery with which young Ser Maso was describing a rare and

beautiful kind of stone. Drawing near, he asked permission to hear further of their conversation and to be told where such stones were to be found. Maso replied, "They abound mostly in Berlinzone, near the city of the Baschi, in a country called Bengodi. There the vines are tied with sausages, a goose is sold for a penny, and the goslings given into the bargain; there is also a high mountain made of Parmesan cheese, whereon dwell people whose sole business it is to make macaroni and other dainties. These they boil with capon broth, and afterwards throw them out to all who choose to catch them. Near to the mountain runs a river of white wine, the best that was ever drunk."

Calandrino listened to this gravely delivered discourse with profound attention, and exclaimed, "Oh! what a delightful country to live in! But pray, sir, tell me what do they do with the capons after they have boiled them?" Maso replied, "The Baschi eat them all." Then Calandrino asked, "Have you, sir, ever been to that country?"—"What!" exclaimed the young man, "you ask me if I have ever been there? Indeed, I should think so; a thousand times at least."—"And how far," continued the painter, "is this happy land from our city?"—"In truth," replied Maso, "the miles are hardly to be numbered; but for the most part we travel thither when we are in our beds at night, and *if a man dreams aright*, he may be there in a few minutes." Then Calandrino said doubtfully, "Surely, sir, it is further hence than to Abruzzo?" And Maso replied, "Undoubtedly; but to a willing mind no travel is tedious."

Maso's gravity and ready seriousness so completely deceived the simple Calandrino that he had no idea of the jest, and said earnestly, "Believe me, sir, the journey is too far for me to undertake; but if it were somewhat nearer, I should like to accompany you thither, to see them make this macaroni and take my fill of it. Allow me, sir, now that we are conversing, to ask you whether or not any of

the precious stones you spoke of are to be found in that country."—"Yes, indeed," replied Maso, "there are two kinds to be found in those territories, both possessing eminent and peculiar virtues."

Calandrino listened with the most rapt and flattering attention, and Maso continued, "The one kind are the sandstones of Settigniano and Montisci, which are of such superb quality that, when millstones or grindstones are to be made, they knead the sand as they do meal, and make them in what form they please. In respect to this they have a saying that 'Grace is from God and millstones from Montisci!' Such plenty is there of these millstones, so lightly esteemed here with us as emeralds are with them, that there are whole mountains of them far greater than our Monte Morello, which shine with a prodigious brightness at midnight, if you will believe me. They, moreover, cut and polish these millstones and enchase them in rings, which are sent to the great Soldan, who gives whatever price they ask for them. The other stone is one which our lapidaries call *heliotropium*, and it is of admirable virtue; since whoever carries it about his person is thereby rendered invisible as long as he pleases." Calandrino, much amazed, said, "This is wonderful indeed, but where else is this kind to be found?" To which Maso replied, "They are found, not infrequently, on our Mugnone."

Then said Calandrino, "Of what size and colour is this stone?"

"It is of various sizes," replied Maso, "some larger than others, but all uniformly black."

Calandrino hereupon took leave of the young man and went towards his home, inwardly resolving to go in quest of these marvellous stones. But first he would seek his friends, Bruno and Buffalmacco, and confide to them the great discovery. He sought for them in vain for a long time, generously determining that they too should have the honour and glory of finding the heliotropium and the millstones. Presently he remembered that they were

painting in the convent of the Little Sisters of Faenza, and thither he pursued them in haste. "My friends," he panted, "if you will follow my advice, we three may soon become the richest men in Florence. I have just learned from a man of undeniable veracity that in Mugnone is to be found a stone which renders invisible any person who carries it about with him; if, therefore, you will be persuaded by me, we will all three go together and find it, before any one else can go to look for it. We shall be certain to find it, because I know its description. When we have found it we shall have nothing to do but go to the tables of the bankers and money-changers, which we see daily loaded with gold and silver, and help ourselves as much as we please. Nobody can detect us, for we shall be invisible; so that we shall soon become rich without toiling all day on these church walls like slow snails, as poor artists are forced to do."

Bruno and Buffalmacco, on hearing this, began to smile, and, understanding each other, seemed to express their surprise and to commend Calandrino for his advice. Then Buffalmacco asked him what the stone was called, but this Calandrino, who had a bad memory, had quite forgotten. So he said, "What need have we of the name when we are so well assured of its virtues? Let us not delay, but go off at once on our search." Then Bruno asked, "But what shape is it?" Calandrino replied, "They are to be found of all shapes, but uniformly black; so that it seems to me we had better collect all the stones that we find black, and thus we shall be certain to find it amongst them. But do let us depart without further loss of time."

Bruno seemed to assent, but then, turning to Buffalmacco, said, "I fully agree with Calandrino, but I cannot think this is the proper time for the search. The sun is high, and is so hot that we shall find all the stones on Mugnone dried and parched, and the very blackest will seem light. But in the morning, when the dew is on the ground, before the sun has dried the earth, every stone

will have its true colour. Besides, there are now many labourers working in the plain who, if they see us occupied in our search, may guess what we are seeking for, and may chance to find the stones before ourselves, so that we should have our labour for nothing. So I advise that this enterprise be taken in hand in the early morning, when the black stones will be easily distinguishable; and a festival day would be the best on which to begin, as then nobody would be about to watch us."

Buffalmacco listened and much applauded this advice; and Calandrino, after a moment's hesitation, assented; so that they agreed that on the Sunday morning next they would go together in search of the stones. Calandrino besought them not to reveal the matter to a single person, as it was confided to him in strict secrecy. Then he began to tell them of the wonders he had heard of the land of Bengodi, asserting solemnly that they were all true. Soon he left them, and they began to plot how to get most amusement out of their friend's simplicity.

On the Sunday morning Calandrino was awake before the break of day, and at dawn had aroused his friends and induced them to set out with him. They left the city by the postern of S. Gallo, and walked without halt till they reached the plain of Mugnone, where they at once began their search for the wonderful stone. Calandrino endeavoured always to be in advance of the other two, for he was convinced that he was born to find the marvellous gem. Looking on every side of him and rejecting all stones but the black, he soon had his breast filled and then his outer pockets. Then he took off his large painting apron and fastened it in his girdle like a sack and filled it also; and still not satisfied, spread out his cloak and loaded it with stones, afterwards binding it up very carefully, so as not to lose even the very least of them.

Buffalmacco and Bruno, who were working less industriously, were eyeing Calandrino all the time, and then, when Calandrino seemed completely burdened with his

treasure, pursued their plan of merriment. Bruno, affecting not to see Calandrino, though he was quite near them, called out, "Buffalmacco, what is become of Calandrino?" Buffalmacco, who saw him close at hand, replied as he gazed around distractedly, "I saw him even now just hard by."

"You may depend," said Bruno, "he has given us the slip and gone secretly home to dinner, leaving us to pick up black stones on these scorching plains of Mugnone."

"Indeed," returned Buffalmacco, "and it serves us right for allowing ourselves to be gulled by such stories. No one but ourselves would have been so credulous as to believe in the magic virtues of this precious stone." Calandrino, hearing them thus converse while he stood quite near them, was at first perplexed, but soon was convinced that he had the genuine heliotropium amongst his treasure, and that he had become invisible to his companions. He was delighted, and resolved to go home with all speed, leaving his two friends to provide for themselves. Buffalmacco, perceiving this, said to Bruno, "Why should we remain here any longer? Let us return to the city." To which Bruno replied, "Yes, let us go. Never again, I vow, shall Calandrino make a fool of me; and if only he were as near me now as he was ten minutes ago, I would give him such a remembrance on the heel with this flint stone as should stick by him for a month, and teach him how to abuse his friends." So saying, he took good aim and, as if to illustrate his words, flung a flint with all his force and hit Calandrino on the heel. The pain was great, but Calandrino, with much fortitude, held himself from crying out, and quickened his pace.

Buffalmacco, determined to punish him well, selected another large flint, and observed to friend Bruno, "Thou seest this flint? If Calandrino were here I would aim it straight at his back"; and, taking aim, Buffalmacco threw the stone with all his might. It hurt Calandrino greatly, but he concealed his agony and hurried on. The other

two accompanied him, talking together, and Buffalmacco often picked up a pebble, as he called it, and threw it violently at the wretched fellow.

When they neared the Gate of San Gallo the two mischief-makers hurried on, and poor Calandrino congratulated himself on their departure. They were, however, only prolonging the joke; for they took the guards into their confidence and suggested that they, too, should pretend not to see Calandrino. So they set the portal open and stood aside, to shake with laughter as they saw the heavily-laden treasure-seeker panting and staggering under his burden. It was at mid-day and the streets were deserted, so that, as Calandrino pursued his way along the river-side, past the mills, and through the narrow alleys, no one saw him, and he reached his house exhausted but rejoicing in his success.

Crossing the threshold he was met by his wife, a handsome and capable woman known as Monna Tessa. Annoyed at his long delay and startled by his strange appearance, she spoke to him sharply, saying, "And where hast been all this while? All the city has dined, and we have not even begun to eat our dinner!" Calandrino, dismayed at finding that to his wife he was not invisible, lost his temper and began violently upbraiding her. In his rage he cast off the tied cloak of stones, and his apronful, and tore them out of his blouse and pockets, flinging them wildly about. His wife, aghast at this behaviour, and more than once struck and bruised by the flying stones, vainly besought him to be calm.

Just when the uproar was at its worst, there arrived Buffalmacco and Bruno down below, calling cheerily on Calandrino to come out with them. He entreated them to come up to him, and climbing the stair they entered, to find Monna Tessa nearly fainting on the floor and her husband distraught and furious. Wearing an air of puzzled sympathy, Bruno presently said, "How now, Calandrino? Art about building a house that thou hast

provided so many stones? And Monna Tessa, what has happened to her? Look at that bleeding brow! What is the meaning of it all?" Calandrino, exhausted with fatigue, and still further spent with his fit of rage, gasped something unintelligible, and Buffalmacco went on, "I do assure you, my friend, that we will not bear to be treated as you have treated us to-day. Whatever may have given you cause for anger here, you had no right to lead us both out to the plains of Mugnone, and then go off without a word to bid us good day! You will not do that again with us, my friend!"

Calandrino, somewhat recovered, said, "Ah, my friends, do not be offended. You do not understand. I am the most unfortunate of men, for the rare and precious stone I found is like to be of no use. You must know that when you asked each other where I was, I was but two yards from you; and I walked home in front of you." The two affected to disbelieve this, and Calandrino, to convince them, showed them his bruised heel and his wounded back. Then he went on, "As I passed through the gates I saw you standing with the guards, but by virtue of the stone I was carrying, I passed unseen by you all. In the streets I met many people I knew, but none saw me. Then when I arrive at my own house, my wife knows me at once! So that evidently my stone has lost all its magic, and I may well curse my lot, and hate myself for all the trouble I took for nothing."

Bruno and Buffalmacco pretended the greatest astonishment at this recital, but presently took up the position of advisers, reminding Calandrino that he should have known better than to have gone straight home while only just possessing the gift of invisibility. "It should be understood," said Bruno gravely, "that a new attribute like that must have time to get more firmly fixed before exposing the wearer to the scrutiny of those most familiar with him."

They further assured him that probably he had now

entirely lost the magic gift through treating his friends so shabbily; taking them with him and then concealing from them his marvellous success. With much reiteration they dwelt on the meanness of his attempt to desert his friends, and protested that they could hardly think there was any likelihood of such good luck coming to him again. When they found that he was thoroughly miserable they left him, and he hastened to be reconciled with his wife and to restore order to his disturbed home. Presently he cheered up and convinced himself that he had enjoyed an unusual experience which falls to the lot of few men, and that undoubtedly the future held yet stranger things in store for him. In this his two merry friends, Bruno and Buffalmacco, cordially agreed.

THE THIRD STORY

NATHAN THE GOOD

IN the country of Cathay, we are told by the Genoese mariners who trade there, there once lived a man of the name of Nathan, who was of noble birth and inconceivably rich. His residence was near the great road from east to west, along which much traffic passed; and being desirous of winning fame for hospitality, he had a splendid palace built and most sumptuously decorated. There he ordered open house to be kept; none was ever to be turned away unserved, nor was any man's business to be inquired into. All persons of rank were introduced to his beautiful wife and family, and were treated as honoured guests so long as they chose to stay.

Thus in the course of years his name had become deservedly honoured from west to east, and when he was quite an old man the fame of his hospitality reached the ears of a rich young man named Mitridanes, who lived in an adjoining country. Giving up his old pursuits of novelties and occasions of extravagant expenditure, he set himself to become rival to Nathan in the magnificence of

his hospitality. So he had constructed a fine palace, larger even than that of Nathan, and more luxuriously furnished, and when it was complete had his gates opened to all comers in the same regal way. Soon he, too, became renowned for his hospitality, but he feared that his fame was but second to that of Nathan.

One day, as he sat in his courtyard by the fountains alone, he saw a poor woman enter by one of the gates, receive alms, and go. Soon she returned and entered by another gate, was again relieved, and went; and so on until she had tried thirteen of the palace entrances. Then Mitridanes spoke to her, saying, "Methinks, good woman, you are extremely persistent in your requests." The old woman replied, "Oh! how unlike the boundless charity of Nathan! I entered at the two-and-thirty gates of his palace, asking alms, and was never recognized by him, but received gifts each time. Here I am arrived only at the thirteenth and am recognized and reproved!"

Thus speaking, she departed, and Mitridanes sat pondering on the failure of his reputation to rival that of Nathan. After some hours' meditation he sprang up in a passion, exclaiming, "When shall I attain to the liberality of Nathan if I am thus far behind him! To excel him I have no hope; my endeavours will be all in vain unless I can have him removed. If his great age does not soon do this, *I must do it myself!*" Then he gave orders for his horse to be brought, and with only a few attendants set off for the great west-to-east road and after three days' journey arrived near Nathan's palace. He charged his servants to be silent as to their master, and to procure themselves lodgings while he went his way. Walking in the grounds of the palace, Mitridanes met Nathan himself, who, plainly dressed and unattended, was taking the air in a solitary walk.

Mitridanes, not knowing him, asked to be directed to the entrance, and Nathan replied, "My son, I will show you myself. There is no one who knows all the palace

ways better than myself." Mitridanes thanked him and, in accepting his offer, said that he desired not to be seen or known of Nathan. The reply was that his wish should be observed, and they walked together, Mitridanes leading his horse. On reaching the gate Nathan signed to a young man in the courtyard, and directed that no one should reveal his identity to the visitor. A groom led away the horse, a steward showed Mitridanes to a sumptuous chamber, and, under Nathan's instructions, servants brought refreshments, clothes, and perfumes. Duly rested and cheered, Mitridanes ventured to talk more freely to the aged seneschal, as he believed him to be, and asked him who he was and what office he was filling. Nathan replied, "I am, as you see, but a poor servant of Nathan, who have grown up with him from infancy, and am now, like him, well advanced in years. Yet he has never bestowed any further advancement on me than what you see; so that however well other men speak of him, I have no cause to admire him."

This encouraged Mitridanes to think that he might reveal his determination with due caution. So when Nathan courteously asked him, in return, about himself and the business which brought him to the palace, Mitridanes, after some hesitation, and under promise of profound secrecy, confided to him his design. Nathan was much moved by the discovery of such wicked malice, but controlled himself, saying, "Your father, Mitridanes, was an honourable man, and I perceive that you mean not to degenerate from him, having adopted so noble a system of hospitality." He then went on, "I very much commend you for the envy you bear to the virtues of Nathan, for if there were sufficient of such noble deeds, this miserable world would soon become good and happy."

Mitridanes listened with interest, anxious to hear whether the old servant would assist him or betray him. After some moments' thought Nathan resumed, "What you have told me shall remain a deep secret, though I

cannot give you any great aid. I will, however, communicate one piece of intelligence which may be of service to you. About half a mile from the eastern portal there is a small wood, in which Nathan is accustomed to walk every morning. This is his recreation, and he stays for an hour or two admiring the works of nature. There you could easily find him and accomplish your object. If you are successful you can then find your way home without returning here: take a narrow footway much overgrown with underwood, and bear always to your left hand. You will in time find yourself on the outskirts of the wood near the great west-to-east road."

Mitridanes soon made an opportunity to visit his attendants in their lodging, and directed them to wait for him at the left-hand extremity of the wood at a certain hour the next morning. Then he returned to the palace and impatiently awaited the passing of the hours till he could carry out his wicked plan. Soon after dawn Nathan arose and went forth alone towards the wood, the place appointed for his death. Presently Mitridanes, approaching on horseback and armed with bow and sword, saw Nathan pensively walking in a sequestered glade. He reflected that he would like to speak to him and to hear him speak before killing him, so, spurring his horse towards him, he seized him roughly by the hood of his cloak, exclaiming, "Die! wretch that thou art!" Nathan, making no resistance, answered quietly, "It is meet that I should."

Then Mitridanes recognized the face and the voice of the supposed steward with whom he had held much converse and who had counselled him so fearlessly. His fury died away, his face mantled with shame, he cast away his sword and, flinging himself off his horse, threw himself at the feet of Nathan, crying, "Dearest father, I humbly confess your unbounded liberality. Your generous almsgiving is as nothing before this; and God, who has deigned to show me my duty, has at this moment of my baseness

opened the eyes of my soul, which wretched envy had closed, so that I do most heartily deplore my transgression. Revenge yourself, therefore, upon me in whatever way you think best, and I will not complain."

Nathan, stooping to the humbled offender, tenderly raised him from the ground, and said, "My son, with regard to your attempt on my life, whatever you may term it, there is no need for you to ask pardon; since, not malice, but a desire of being reputed more estimable than me, led you to make it. So be assured of my good will, and believe that no man will love you with deeper affection than I, since I fully appreciate the magnanimity of your mind, which would not let you be content to amass and hoard riches like a miser, but moved you to spend them liberally. Neither, my son, blush at having sought to become famous by my death. The most potent emperors and kings, animated by the same feelings as your own, have often slain, not one man only, but countless multitudes of men, and have burnt and destroyed many cities, in order to extend their dominions and perpetuate their fame. So that, when you designed to render yourself famous by taking my life, you contemplated nothing new, but only a thing of common occurrence."

Mitridanes could not accept this strange reasoning as any excuse for his own evil designs, but he thanked Nathan profoundly for his great kindness, and expressed his surprise that Nathan should have assented to the plan and gone unresistingly to his own death. To this Nathan replied, "Nay, Mitridanes, do not be astonished at what I did, for it was my object to gratify you in whatever you were ambitious of doing. No one ever came to my house whom I did not satisfy to the utmost of my power in the way most agreeable to him. Hence, when I saw that you came here desirous of my life, I determined that you should not be the only person to depart unsatisfied, and so I would give it to you. And indeed, now, I pray and entreat you that, if you are still desirous of it, you will

take it and satisfy yourself, for I know not how better I could dispose of it. I have now lived eighty years in the world, and they have passed away in pleasure and happiness; but I know from the course of nature that there is remaining but a short span to me. I consider it, therefore, much better to give away that, as I have been in the habit of giving away other treasures, than to keep it till it shall be rudely forced from me by nature. A hundred years would be but a poor gift: how much less, then, are the six or eight which alone can belong to me! Take my life, then, I beg, if it would be agreeable to you to do so; never have I met any one before who wished to have it, and I know not when another may ask for it if you do not accept it. Also, that the longer I keep it the less value it will be; so that I beg you to accept it lest it become quite vile and useless."

Mitridanes, much moved with shame and contrition, replied with tears, "God forbid, sir, that I should take so dear a thing as your life, and may God pardon me for my evil designs. Rather than diminish the term of your life, I would gladly, if it were in my power, add mine own to lengthen it." —"And will you indeed add to it? and oblige me to do what I have never yet done to any man, rob you to enrich myself?" Mitridanes protested that he was in earnest. "Certainly, and most readily I will," he answered.

Then Nathan said, "So you shall. Hence, do as I direct. You shall remain in my palace as a young man, and I will go to yours and call myself Mitridanes. Thus Nathan and yourself will have changed places." To which Mitridanes replied, "If indeed I knew how to act like you I would without hesitation accept your offer. But as my deeds could but diminish the reputation of Nathan, and I am not desirous to destroy in another that which I cannot myself obtain, I will not accept your offer; but, as you have worthily taught me, will live contented with my own condition."

This and much more agreeable conversation passed between Nathan and Mitridanes as they returned to the

palace. There Nathan sumptuously entertained his guest for many days, and encouraged, by every means in his power, his noble spirit of emulation. When Mitridanes at length returned home he went convinced that he might never surpass Nathan in liberality, but resolved to endeavour to equal him.

THE FOURTH STORY

THE SULTAN SALADIN AND MESSER TORELLO

IN the time of the great Emperor Frederic Barbarossa the Sultan Saladin was reigning in the East. Being aware of the general preparation throughout Christendom for a crusade to recover the Holy Land, Saladin determined to journey to Europe in order to see for himself the extent and resources of the coming invaders. Leaving his palace in Babylon, and attended only by three of his principal nobles, he announced himself as setting out on a pilgrimage. Disguised as a merchant, and with some bales of goods for sale, he travelled into Europe, and at length arrived in the Christian state of Lombardy. Journeying between Milan and Pavia, the disguised Sultan and his companions fell in with a certain gentleman of Pavia, Messer Torello d'Istria, who, with attendants and dogs and falcons, was making his way to his country seat on the Tesino.

Messer Torello, seeing that the advancing travellers were foreigners, was desirous of paying his respects to them; so that, when Saladin asked one of the attendants how far yet to Pavia, Messer Torello stepped forward and himself replied, "You cannot reach Pavia this evening, gentlemen, in time to pass the gates."

"Then," said Saladin, "have the kindness to inform us where we may obtain a night's lodging." To this Messer Torello said, "This I will cheerfully do. I was just on the point of sending one of my people to the neighbourhood of Pavia on an errand. He shall take you with him, and he will conduct you to a place where you will find good enter-

tainment." Addressing himself to one of the discreetest of his servants, he charged him how to act and sent him on to guide the strangers, and hastened with all dispatch to his villa to make elaborate preparations for the coming guests, also giving instructions for an elegant supper to be provided.

Meanwhile the man appointed to bring the travellers had engaged them in conversation and led them a little way round, presently approaching Messer Torello's residence. Messer Torello stepped forward to greet them, saying, "Gentlemen, you are very welcome." Saladin perceived that thus by a polite fiction Messer Torello had avoided the possibility of having his invitation refused, while he had really brought them to his own house, and said, "Sir, if it were possible to chide a gentleman for his hospitality, we might chide you, who—to say nothing of our having intercepted you on your journey—have thus brought us to share your noble courtesy. We feel that we had no claim upon you except to be directed on our way."

Messer Torello replied, "Gentlemen, I am well aware that this reception I am giving you is one quite unworthy of your rank. But as no suitable place could be found to-night in Pavia, I beg you not to murmur that I have brought you somewhat out of your way to obtain a less uncomfortable lodging."

Grooms led away the travellers' horses, and they were conducted to their chambers by Messer Torello himself. Their high boots were taken off, water brought, and after removing the stains of travel they enjoyed flagons of cool wine. Saladin, understanding the Latin tongue, was able to confer with Messer Torello on many interesting subjects until they were rested. Each party thought the other accomplished and agreeable, and Messer Torello felt so convinced that his guests were men of high birth that he wished he could have invited an honourable company to be present.

He determined to make amends for this on the next day, and dispatched a messenger to Pavia to inform his wife of

what had occurred. Showing his visitors his gardens and statuary, Torello politely inquired as to what country was theirs. Saladin replied, "We are merchants of Cyprus, travelling thence on business to Paris." To which Messer Torello answered, "Would to God that our country produced such gentlemen as your Cyprus produces merchants." Soon supper was announced, and they were served with the best the house contained, in great respect and ceremony. The repast was enjoyed, and when the tables were removed Messer Torello directed his steward to show the travellers to their rooms, where comfortable beds had been prepared for them, and he himself retired to rest.

The messenger had meanwhile reached Messer Torello's Pavia residence and communicated his information to the lady. She, being a woman of magnanimous mind and fully in sympathy with her husband's projects, sent out invitations at once to many noble citizens, so that there might be a worthy feast on the next day. In the morning the guests prepared to take their departure, and Messer Torello accompanied them on horseback with his hounds and falcons, leading them towards the river, where for some time they shared his sport. Then Saladin asked for a guide to lead him and his companions on to Pavia, and to the best inn in the city. Messer Torello replied, "I will myself have the pleasure to conduct you as my affairs lead me that way."

Believing him, they were satisfied, and journeyed with him along the road, it being about the third hour when they reached the city. Instead of guiding them to an inn, Torello took them to his own gates, where were at least fifty of the chief citizens arrived, and they dismounted to give respectful greeting. Saladin, immediately aware of the true state of the case, said, "Messer Torello, this is not what we requested of you. You have done more than we should ever have ventured to ask when you so hospitably detained us last night." Then Torello replied, "Gentlemen, for the pleasure of your company last night I was indebted

to chance; for it was the late hour which compelled you to shelter at my house. But to-day I hope to be beholden to your bounty, and that of the gentlemen with you, in giving me the honour of your company to dinner."

Thus overcome in gracious hospitality, Saladin and his companions dismounted, and were politely conducted to their chambers, which had been sumptuously prepared for them. Having thrown off their travelling-dresses and refreshed themselves they entered a splendid dining-hall, where perfumed water was offered them for their hands; and they seated themselves at a table spread with delicious viands. "Indeed, sir," said Saladin, as the feast progressed, "the Emperor himself could not be entertained with greater honour." For they were greatly surprised to behold such splendour and such state in the household of a simple citizen.

After the banquet Messer Torello proceeded to show his galleries and treasures, and, said he, "I must show you my most precious treasure of all"; and he commanded his steward to desire his mistress's presence in the long gallery. She presently appeared, gracious in manner and most richly attired, accompanied by two noble boys—her sons—who advanced respectfully to greet their father, and then modestly saluted the strangers. They received her and the boys with much kind dignity, and soon all were seated talking. Messer Torello left them for a moment to fetch a gem he desired to show, and the lady politely inquired of what country they were and whither they were bound. The travellers made the same reply as they had made to her husband. The lady then said, with a gracious smile, "I see that my womanly prudence may be of service, and therefore I beg your acceptance of a trifling gift."

She then ordered to be brought in two robes for each of the travellers—one lined with cloth of gold and the other with costly fur—and three light vestments of satin, richly embroidered. All were far more suited to great lords than to citizens or merchants. "I beg you to accept these

robes, such as my husband wears, the more especially as you are far from your wives and have yet far to travel; for I remember that merchants are men of delicate habits. And though these are of slender value, they may yet do you service."

The strangers were greatly amazed at thus finding that Messer Torello proposed to leave no instance of courtesy unperformed, and they began to doubt whether their disguise were not penetrated by him. They thanked the lady profusely, adding, "These are indeed, madam, valuable gifts; nor should we feel it right to accept them but that you make it a particular request, which we may not deny." Torello himself now returning, the lady took a gracious farewell and retired, while he made entreaties that the visitors would consent to prolong their stay for one more day. This acceded, he took them to ride through the city, showing them all the famous buildings, they wearing their new robes on the occasion.

When evening came they were again regaled with a magnificent repast, and went to rest at a late hour pleasantly wearied with the delightful amusements provided; and in the morning, when about to set forth, they found awaiting them, instead of their own horses wearied with travel, three beautiful palfreys, and fresh horses for their attendants. Saladin, beholding them, said, "By Allah! I never met with a more accomplished, courteous, and amiable man than this Torello. If all Christian kings and knights bear their parts so nobly, certainly the Sultan of Babylon will not be able to resist them." So, after an interchange of many compliments, the travellers departed.

Messer Torello, with several of his friends mounted, accompanied them for some distance out of the city, and when at length he took leave of them he entreated Saladin to visit him on their return, and said, "I know not, gentlemen, who you are, nor against your will do I desire to know; but whether you be merchants or not, I beg you to hold me in your remembrance. I commend you and

your desires to God." Saladin answered him, "Sir, I wish that fortune may one day put it in our power to let you see some of our merchandise, for the better confirmation of your belief." They then rode away, Saladin resolving in his noble mind that, should his life be spared in the war which was about to ensue, to make a due return to Messer Torello for the honour thus shown to him; and to this effect he commended him highly to his companions and admired his wife and his sons.

After many months' journey through the West, in which he endured great fatigues, Saladin prepared to embark on board ship for Alexandria, hoping to use for his own defence the information he had gathered in Christendom. Messer Torello, on his return to Pavia, often wondered who were the stately visitors he had entertained, but no conjecture of his was ever near the truth. The crusade being now declared, Messer Torello, turning a deaf ear to his wife's entreaties to remain at home, resolved to share in the honour of the enterprise.

When everything was ready he took farewell of her, saying, "Dearest wife, I depart as you see on this holy enterprise, which I undertake as well for the honour of the body as the salvation of the soul. I commend to your care all our possessions, and you have the control of everything in your hands. And as a thousand accidents may happen to prevent my return, I have to ask you one favour: If you have not certain intelligence of my death, wait for a year and a month and a day, commencing from the last tidings, before marrying again."

The lady, bitterly weeping, replied, "I know not how I shall surmount the sorrow of your departure, but if I should survive, believe that, whatever may happen to you, I shall live and die the wife of Messer Torello." To which he made answer, "Certain I am, lady, that you will keep your promise as far as lies in your own power; but you are young and beautiful, and of high parentage, and are held in universal esteem. So that, I fear me, noble

suitors may approach you, should there come a rumour of my death, and brothers and relations may use so strong entreaties that you cannot withstand them. Hence I ask only for the delay I have named." And she replied, "I will conform myself to your wishes, and will pray daily that you may return in safety"; and, taking a ring from her finger, she said, "If I chance to die before I see you again, remember me when you look upon this ring." Receiving the ring, he mounted his horse and, bidding adieu to all his friends, departed on his way.

THE FOURTH STORY (*continued*)

MESSER TORELLO, on reaching Genoa, went on board a galley, and presently reached Acre, where he joined the Christian army. At this time a violent sickness broke out in the camp, and the survivors were easily captured by Saladin, who scattered them in prisons in various cities. Amongst the captives was Messer Torello, who was carried to Alexandria. There he used his skill in the keeping of falcons, and presently became known to Saladin, who made him his chief falconer. He was known in the royal household as the "Christian," and Saladin had failed to recognize in him his generous entertainer of Pavia. When Torello was meditating how to make his escape, ambassadors from Genoa arrived, bringing ransom for their fellow-citizens. To these men, on their return, he entrusted a letter to his beloved wife, informing her that he was living and would return at the earliest opportunity. The missive was to be delivered to his uncle, the Abbot of San Pietro, in Ciel d'Oro.

A little while later Saladin happened to be conversing with Torello about his falcons, and observed him to use certain gestures, and to smile, twisting his lip, which reminded him of some one in the past. Presently he remembered that his host at Pavia had this trick, and he said, "Pray, Christian, of what country of the West are

you?"—"My lord," answered Torello, "I am a Lombard, a citizen of Pavia, and but a poor man of humble condition." When Saladin heard this he said within himself, "God hath now happily given me an opportunity of testifying to this man my sense of his courtesy." Then he ordered his wardrobe to be opened, and the garments to be spread out in his chamber; and taking thither Messer Torello, he showed him them, and said, "Look on these robes, Christian, and tell me if you have ever seen any of them before."

Torello inspected them, and recognized those which his wife had presented to the travelling merchants, but not thinking it possible that they could be the same, he said, "My lord, I do not know them. It is indeed true that these resemble some which I have worn myself."

Saladin then, unable longer to restrain himself, tenderly embraced him, saying, "You are Messer Torello d'Istria, and I am one of the three merchants to whom your lady gave these robes. Now the time is arrived when I can show you my merchandise, as, on my departure, I said might possibly happen." Messer Torello was delighted and abashed at being thus addressed by the Sultan, remembering how unworthy of His Majesty had been the entertainment. He murmured some words of regret at the lack of splendour, and Saladin replied, "Messer Torello, since it has pleased God to send you to me, account yourself sole lord here, and consider me a private person." Then he caused Torello to be arrayed in royal robes, and introduced him at a great feast to his nobility, relating many things in his praise, and announced that whoever desired to share his favour must treat Messer Torello as of equal honour with himself. This request was most cheerfully complied with, especially by the two lords who had accompanied him to Pavia. The good fortune which had thus come to Torello comforted him in some degree for his absence from home, especially as he relied upon his letter being delivered into his uncle's hands.

Now it happened that on the day when the remnant of the Christian army was captured by Saladin, there had died and been buried a certain Provençal knight called Messer Torello di Dignes, and Messer Torello d'Istria being known throughout the army as a man of family, the news spread that he it was who was dead. As he was taken prisoner on that day his safety was not published, so that the truth was not known, and several Italians, returning home, bore with them the news that Messer Torello d'Istria was dead. The report reached the ears of his kindred and his dear lady, and his house and city became a scene of lamentation and mourning. After many months of seclusion the widow found herself approached by suitors from some of the principal families in Lombardy, and her brother and other relations urged her strongly to marry again.

She resisted for a long time, but at length found her resolution breaking down under their urgent entreaties, and she gave reluctant assent to their wishes, only stipulating that she should be allowed to wait for a year and a month and a day, as desired by her husband when he bade her farewell. While these things were happening in Pavia, it chanced that Messer Torello in Alexandria recognized one of the persons who had accompanied the Genoese ambassadors on board the galley, and calling to him, inquired whether they had enjoyed a prosperous voyage and when they had arrived at Genoa. The attendant replied, "My lord, our vessel made a most disastrous voyage, as is known in Crete, where I remained some time. For when we were near to Sicily there arose a violent north wind which drove us on the shoals of Barbary, where all but myself perished, and amongst the rest my two brothers."

Messer Torello heard this intelligence with much disturbance, for he feared that the period he had asked his wife to wait must soon expire; and the thought of it threw him into such grief that he could neither eat nor sleep, but lay

on his bed a prey to despair. Saladin, hearing of his indisposition, sought him out and at length learned the cause. He blamed him exceedingly for not having sooner informed him of it, but at the same time comforted him with the assurance that Messer Torello should be in Pavia before the precious interval had expired. He then requested one of his magicians to devise some way in which Torello might be transported on a bed in the night to Pavia. The wonder-worker replied that it should be done, but that for his own sake Torello should take a sleeping-draught.

Again seeking out his guest, the Sultan addressed him thus: "Messer Torello, if you love your lady with so much devotion, Heaven is my witness that I cannot blame you; since of all the women I have seen she is the one whose appearance, manners, and address, together with her extreme beauty, have won my admiration above all others. It would, indeed, have been my pride, since fortune has sent you here, that we might together have enjoyed our remaining terms of life reigning over this kingdom as joint rulers. But as Heaven denies me this favour, and you are determined to return to Pavia or to die, I should wish to have known the time, that I might accompany you thither with a suitable retinue. This, too, is denied me, and as you desire to be there immediately I will fulfil your wishes."

To this Messer Torello made answer, "My lord, your deeds have sufficiently testified your affection towards me, and it is far beyond my merits; but I now entreat you that this last act of kindness may be speedily effected, since I fear that to-morrow even may be too late." Saladin assured him that it should be done, and ordered a magnificent bed to be set up in the great hall of the palace; the mattress covered with velvet and cloth of gold, and the quilts and hangings lavishly embroidered with Orient pearls and precious stones, with two luxurious pillows of finest down. He then desired Messer Torello to attire himself in a magnificent suit, and placed on his head one of the largest of his own turbans.

When the hour was late Saladin, accompanied by some of his noblest lords, entered Messer Torello's chamber and, seating himself beside him, said, almost with tears, "Messer Torello, the hour which separates us approaches, for I cannot accompany you, so that I must bid you farewell. But I entreat you, by the love and friendship I bear you, to think often of me, and to return to me again when you have arranged your affairs in Lombardy." Messer Torello, much moved by the tender affection shown, promised that he would endeavour to return, and that never could he forget the generosity with which Saladin had treated him.

Then Messer Torello was placed upon the magnificent couch, and the Sultan's physician presented him with a cordial. He at once fell into a deep slumber, and Saladin had a beautiful coronet laid upon the couch, with an inscription that it was presented by Saladin to the wife of Messer Torello. Upon Torello's finger he placed a fine ring with a blazing carbuncle set in it which glowed like a torch, and girded him with a sword whose hilt was splendidly embossed and richly set with pearls. Around him on the couch were strewn many treasures and jewels, and the magician of the court was charged to accomplish his task forthwith. Immediately the couch and its sleeping occupant were invisibly transported and set down in the church of San Pietro of Ciel d'Or, in Pavia.

In the morning, when the sexton entered the church to prepare for the service and saw the sumptuous bed, he was affrighted, and fled in terror to the Abbot. "How is this?" said the Abbot. "Thou art not a child that thou shouldst be terrified. Return with me, and let us together see the cause of thy fears." Tremblingly the monk followed the Abbot and his attendant clergy up the aisle, where all with great astonishment saw the magnificent couch and the sleeping figure of Messer Torello. While they gazed in wonder he heaved a deep sigh and awoke. Then the Abbot and all the monks, greatly startled, exclaimed, "God and St. Peter save us!" and retired to a side altar.

Messer Torello, sitting up, found himself, as Saladin had promised, in the church of San Pietro, with the many reminders of Eastern splendour around his person, and the terrified Abbot and monks in the distance. Raising his voice, he called out to the Abbot, "Holy Father, do not fear! I am your nephew Torello." This frightened the Abbot still more, as for many months he had believed his nephew to be dead. Slowly he took courage to approach, and presently recognized his kinsman, in spite of the Arabian dress and the long beard he had grown. "Son," said he, "thou art happily returned; but thou needest not wonder at my alarm, since in all this country there is not a person who does not believe thee dead. In proof of this I may inform thee that thy dear wife, overcome by the entreaties of her friends, is this morning to be married to a new husband, and a marriage feast is prepared in honour of the nuptials."

Messer Torello asked who was the intended new husband of the lady, and on being told, said, "Before my return is made known I wish to inform myself as to how my dear wife herself regards her approaching marriage; so that I entreat you to take me to the feast as a guest under your protection." This the Abbot consented to do, and the next day begged permission of the intended bridegroom to be present, and to bring a stranger newly arrived from the East. The gentleman replied that he should be much honoured to receive them both.

At the hour of the banquet the Abbot and Messer Torello presented themselves, the latter still wearing his rich Arabian garments and, by his magnificence, attracting the attention of all the guests, who believed him to be a Saracen of rank on an embassy to the King of France. Messer Torello was placed at a table directly opposite his lady, whom he regarded with great delight, especially as he was convinced that she looked troubled rather than rejoicing. She observed him, but with no suspicion that he was other than he appeared.

As the banquet progressed Messer Torello determined to

test her real feelings; so calling a young page he said, "Go to the bride and, saluting her from me, inform her that it is the custom in my country that when any stranger is at a marriage feast the bride graciously pledges him in the same cup from which she has drunk, in token that he is welcome." The page did as he was directed, and the lady, supposing that the stranger sincerely awaited a welcome, ordered a gold cup which stood before her to be filled with the choicest wine and carried to the stranger.

This was done, and Messer Torello, in returning the cup, placed in it the ring which his wife had given him on his departure. The bride received the gold cup and, graciously drinking from it, beheld the ring! Unobserved by the company, she took it out and, recognizing it, looked again at the stranger, supposing that he had borne a message to her from her husband. Then suddenly she started up in an ecstasy, exclaiming, "My lord and husband! Messer Torello!" She rushed to her husband's side and flung herself on his neck.

Thus strangely was the marriage feast disturbed; but the whole company seemed glad and joyful at the unexpected return of the honourable cavalier, and begged him to relate his adventures. This he did, and declared that he in no way blamed the intending bridegroom. He in his turn, though sad and overcast, protested that he relinquished his claim, and desired to share in the welcome accorded to the returned husband.

Then Messer Torello placed on his wife's hand the ring which had accompanied him, and on her head the rich coronet sent by Saladin, and in a joyful procession of great pomp they went to Messer Torello's house. He distributed royally the rich gifts with which he had come laden, not forgetting the disappointed bridegroom and his uncle, the Abbot, and settled down to a happy and peaceful life with his noble lady. Thus they lived many years in the esteem and admiration of all who knew them.

THREE STORIES BY FRANCO SACCHETTI

FRANCO SACCHETTI, the author of Three Hundred Novels and Tales, was an honoured citizen of Florence in the late fourteenth century. He was made a member of the Council of Eight and Prior of the Literary Guild, and was more than once ambassador for his city. The example and influence of Boccaccio first led him to try to construct stories, and so successful did he become that they were esteemed almost as highly as those of Boccaccio himself. One of his tales is a version of the one familiar to us in ballad form of King John and the Abbot. Another reminds us of Swift's satirical treatment of the politics of his day, and undoubtedly had some foundation in fact in the many political missions undertaken by Florentines in Sacchetti's time.

THE FIRST STORY

THE LORD OF MILAN AND THE ABBOT

MESSER BERNABO, Lord of Milan, in accordance with the custom of sporting landowners, entrusted to his humbler neighbours the young hounds of the pack for training. To the Abbot of San Filippo, on the outskirts of the great forest, he committed two mastiff whelps, which, in due course, were returned to the castle to take their place in the pack. They were then found to be ill-trained, quarrelsome, and disobedient, so that Messer Bernabo announced that the Abbot was to be fined four florins for breach of trust.

The reverend father, who could ill afford this, pleaded

for mercy. But the Lord Bernabo merely replied that he must pay the fine *or* give him satisfaction in some other way. Being a man of capricious humour and more than a little whimsical, his next words dashed the hope which had sprung up in the Abbot's heart. "You must either, Sir Abbot, pay the fine *or* tell me the true answers to these three questions:—

"*First.* What distance is it from earth to heaven?

"*Second.* What quantity of water is there in the sea?

"*Third.* What I am thinking as you stand before me?

"If you succeed in this task I will remit the fine."

The Abbot hung his head in profound meditation for a few moments, and then asked that he might have a short time at home for reflection. Messer Bernabo replied that he would grant him one day only, and exacted from him heavy security that he would return. So the Abbot mounted his palfrey, and with a heavy heart rode home through the pleasant glades to his abbey. On reaching his demesne the first person he met was his Miller; a jolly man of high spirit and rubicund countenance, who saw with distress the Abbot's appearance of melancholy.

"I may well look disturbed," said the Abbot, "considering that His Excellency has set me to answer three questions, which neither Solomon nor Socrates would attempt."

"Is that so?" inquired the Miller; "but I pray you, father, entrust them to me; I will find the answers."

"The Lord grant thou couldest!" murmured the Abbot.

"With the Divine help I am convinced I can," returned the Miller.

"Then," said the Abbot, "if thou really canst I shall confess myself in thy debt to the end of my life, and I will do anything thou desirest to show my gratitude."

"That is saying a great deal, reverend father," observed the Miller. "But to the questions."

Here the Abbot hesitated. "I do not see how thou canst possibly answer them to my Lord."

"Surely, yes; 'tis easy enough," returned the fearless Miller. "I shall shave off my beard, wear your reverence's hood and cloak, and present myself to-morrow morning in your stead, prepared to answer any questions His Excellency may put."

"The Lord bless thee for a daring rascal!" exclaimed the Abbot. "But verily I believe thou wilt bring me through. Get thee gone. And to-morrow hasten back with the result. It will seem like a thousand years till thy return."

So, early next morning, the Miller, shaven and wearing his disguise, presented himself at the palace gate in Milan, knocked loudly, and briskly ordered the porter to take him at once to his master, that he might deliver certain important answers by word of mouth.

His Excellency instructed his servants to bring the supposed Abbot before him, and the false prior entered with a profound reverence. He shrewdly studied the Lord's air and manner and, imitating the Abbot's voice, humbly explained that he had come prepared to reply to His Excellency's questions.

"So then," said Messer Bernabo, "what is the exact distance between earth and heaven?"

The Miller replied, "Having considered the matter very carefully, I find that there are just thirty-six millions eight hundred and fifty-four miles, seventy-two yards, and twenty-two feet."

"You must have measured it very exactly," said His Excellency; "but how will you prove it correct?"

"How?" said the Miller, "in the usual way; by your Excellency referring it to arbitration. If it should be found on a second measurement to be more, or less, than what I say, hang me up by the neck to the nearest tree."

"Very well," said his lord. "Now pray tell me the exact quantity of water in the sea."

"That," replied the Miller, "I have found very troublesome to compute, since it would neither stay still nor cease

from receiving its tributaries. Nevertheless I have compassed it, and find that there are just twenty-five thousand nine hundred and fifteen millions of vats, seven barrels, seven bottles, and two glasses of water in the sea."

"But how have you learned that, Sir Abbot?" inquired Messer Bernabo.

"If you do not believe me," said the Miller, "pray order the proper vessels to be prepared and have the calculation done over again. If I am wrong, have me quartered without mercy."

"We will see," returned the Lord. "Now pray inform me what are my unspoken thoughts?"

"That is a question very easy to answer, my lord," said the Miller. "You think that you have the Abbot of San Filippo before you, whereas I am only his grinder of corn."

Then Messer Bernabo smiled wryly and said, "Nay, but thou shalt be. Because he dared not come here, and thou daredst, henceforth thou shalt be Abbot and he shall be miller. And rob you of your corn," he added, with a harsh laugh. This sentence, however, he could not enforce; but he ordered that every year a bag of gold should be given out of the abbey revenue to the daring Miller to reward him for his spirit and wit.

THE SECOND STORY

THE FORGETFUL AMBASSADORS

DURING the years that Bishop Guido was Lord of the city of Arezzo the people of Casentino desired to appeal to him on a matter concerning the welfare of their district. The Bishop delayed to perform his visitation, so the citizens determined to send two Ambassadors to lay their pleas before him. Their choice fell upon Messer Bergamino and Messer Merdollino, who seemed to be honest and thriving merchants with clear heads and

calm judgment. These they charged with the mission, asking them to use dispatch and be ready to take their journey the next morning.

Preparing their luggage in haste, the two Ambassadors set out, and, when they had gone some miles, each observed the other with anxious consideration. Said Messer Bergamino, "Do you recollect all the particulars of which they informed us in so hasty a way?" And Messer Merdollino confessed that he hardly did. "But," said Bergamino, "I relied chiefly on you!" To which the other replied, "And I trusted to you!" Then each regarded the other and murmured together, "We are in a pretty scrape. What shall we do?"

Presently Messer Bergamino said, "I tell you what: let us go on to the next inn, and perhaps after a good dinner we shall remember the points more clearly."—"Good!" replied the other; "that is a capital idea. We shall be sure to remember them when we are refreshed." Then they jogged on, half asleep and half awake, and at about three o'clock reached an inn. Here they ordered dinner with no delay, and charged the host to supply a bottle of his best wine. While they waited they honestly racked their brains to remember the points of their mission.

When the meal was ready they took their seats at table, and found the excellence of the food and the goodness of the wine make up in some degree for their annoyance at their lapse of memory. Unfortunately they pursued their plan of trusting to the wine to give vigour to their memories, and ordered another bottle, which did not have the desired effect, but, on the contrary, seemed to cloud rather than clear their minds. They sat pensively reflecting, and presently fell asleep, waking only in the late evening.

When they awoke Messer Bergamino asked his friend if he now recollected. "No," was the reply; "I am always just about to recollect but cannot quite get hold of the points."—"That is so with me," returned Messer Merdol-

lino. "Let us stay here to-night. Every one knows that the mind becomes clearer towards early morning. Let us engage beds, and sleep upon it, and no doubt the matter will be quite clear to us in the morning." Messer Bergamino readily agreed, and soon after supper, at which they renewed the experiment with the excellent wine, they went to rest.

At breakfast the next morning each asked the other if his memory of their mission had returned, and each heard with impatience that it had not. Then said Messer Merdollino, "Let us mount horse again and set out. Every one knows it is easy to think in the open air." So they took to the road, each asking the other at intervals, "Have you got it?" "Has it come?" and receiving the reply, "Not yet," "Not at all clearly."

On arriving at Arezzo they alighted at one of the first hotels and, ordering a private room, determined to put their heads together and get the matter clear. But it was of no avail; and then Messer Merdollino said, "Come, let us go. When we are in the Bishop's presence we shall know what to say."—"But shall we?" dubiously inquired Messer Bergamino. However, as there seemed nothing else to be done, he agreed, and they set out for the palace.

Asking for an audience, they informed the porter that they had business of a serious nature to communicate, and were introduced to the Bishop's presence. They both made a low obeisance and remained silent. "You are welcome, gentlemen," said the Bishop kindly. "What tidings of import do you bring?" Each of the Ambassadors looked at the other, and bowing, murmured, "Do you speak."—"Nay, sir; do you." After some delay in this polite forbearance, Messer Merdollino, as the boldest, said to the Bishop, "We are come, my lord, as ambassadors from your poor servants of Casentino; and I assure you that both those who send us, and we who are sent, are equally devoted to your lordship; but, please your Grace, our mission was entrusted to us in haste, and whatever

may be the occasion of it, we are convinced that either our assembly must have informed us wrong or we have in some way misunderstood them. Nevertheless, we humbly commend both them and ourselves to your Grace's good offices; though what possessed them to send us on such a mission, or ourselves to come, we know not."

The good Bishop smiled upon them encouragingly and said, "Well, well, my friends, it is all right. Go home and say to my dear children of Casentino that I shall always be happy to serve them in every way in my power; so much so that they need be at no expense in appointing ambassadors at my court. Let them only write to me, and I will reply agreeably to their wishes." Then the Bishop took leave of them, and they resumed their way, Messer Bergamino saying to his companion, "Let us take care not to fall into the same error on our return."—"Yes," was the reply; "but it is easy enough; we have got nothing to remember."—"Still, we must have our wits about us," said Bergamino. "We shall be asked what we said in our oration, and what the Bishop replied. For if we have nothing to say, they will never again employ us on an important mission."

To this Messer Merdollino replied, "Oh, leave that to me. I will tell them such a story about the embassy that they will be quite satisfied."—"Now let us spur along," said Bergamino; "we may be in time for dinner at the same inn."

"That is well thought," replied Merdollino; and, mending their pace, they soon dismounted at the scene of their pleasant rest. They ordered dinner, and called for some of the Frontignac so much enjoyed before. After a meal and a long rest they mounted and resumed their journey home.

Soon they arrived at Casentino, and a time was appointed for them to meet the Council of the citizens. "All will go well," said Merdollino. And so it did. For they gave so good an account of their opening oration to

the Bishop, and of his gracious reply inviting his dear children to write to him at their ease, that the Council were convinced that great things were in store for their little township. In their enthusiasm the members likened Messers Bergamino and Merdollino to the greatest orators of old days, and the thanks of the assembly were unanimously voted to them, as well as considerable rewards.

On receiving them, Messer Bergamino looked gravely at Messer Merdollino, and he returned the glance with gravity. For ambassadors accomplish their task most satisfactorily in knowing how to keep silence.

THE THIRD STORY

THE BLIND MAN OF ORVIETO

A BARBER of the famous city of Orvieto had the misfortune to lose his sight when he was well on in middle age. He had been a competent barber and served his customers well, shaving them close and trimming their hair carefully. But with the loss of his sight such a trade was impossible, so he betook himself to begging alms. He used to station himself near the great doorway of the church of Santa Maria, and with outstretched hand appeal to the charity of worshippers and passers-by. Soon he found that his new calling was more lucrative than his old; and after some time he had saved one hundred florins in his purse. For a time he carried the money about with him, but at length determined to hide it in a safe place within the church.

From frequenting the church so often, and being quick of hearing, he knew of a loose tile in the floor near the door of the baptistery. So one day he remained in the building for some time after the service was ended, until he believed himself to be alone there. Then he went cautiously and laid his bag of florins beneath the loose tile, and replaced it quite evenly. But he had not been unobserved. A cer-

tain Juccio Pezzicheruolo had waited to present his offering at the shrine of San Giovanni Boccadoro, and saw the blind Cola busy near the baptistery door. When the blind man had departed Juccio went to the spot and sought to find out what Cola had been about. With his graving tool he removed the tile and seized the bag of florins, replacing the tile as before; then he went home with Cola's savings in his pocket.

Three days later poor Cola, desirous of inspecting his treasure, visited the empty church at midday and, going quietly to the corner, raised the tile. To his horror and amazement his money was not there! And in a sad state of helpless indignation he went home. After much miserable reflection he turned his mind to some way of recovering his florins, and at length decided upon a plan.

In the morning he called to him a young lad of nine years, and offered to reward him for his services if he would spend some hours with him. The boy consented. "Lead me to the church," said Cola; and thither they went. Seating himself in a recess at the entrance, as was his wont, he charged the lad to observe very closely all who entered or passed by, and to take especial note of all who regarded the blind beggar.

During the whole of the morning nothing of note happened, and Cola was beginning to despair. Then there passed by Juccio Pezzicheruolo, and laughed to himself as he saw Cola sitting with outstretched hand. "Lead me to my lodging that I may dine," said Cola; and the boy took him towards his home. "Tell me, my lad," said the blind man, "has no one looked hard at me this morning?"

"Yes, master," said the boy; "just one looked at you very straight and then laughed. I do not know his name, but he is strongly marked with smallpox, and I know the street where he lives; it is somewhere near the Frati Minori."

"Then, my lad," said Cola, "lead me to his shop and tell me if he is there." So they set off together; and the sharp

little fellow led him across Orvieto's market-place and past the Council Hall and through the narrow streets by the Convent of the Frati Minori. There he stopped by a cheesemonger's stall. "This is the man," he said. "Wait for me by the corner," said Cola, and approached the salesman, who was talking and jesting with his customers. Cola knew the voice, and remembered Juccio, whom he had known in the way of trade before he lost his sight.

When the customers had drifted away Cola begged the favour of a few minutes' conversation, and Juccio, half suspecting the subject, took him into a little room on one side. "Cola, my friend," he said with assumed heartiness, "what news?"—"Why," returned Cola, "I have come to consult you in great hopes that you can be of use to me. You know that for some time now I have been obliged to get my living by asking alms. By the grace of God and the help of you and other good people of Orvieto I have saved a sum of two hundred florins, one of which I have deposited in a safe place, and the other is in the hands of relations. This I expect to receive, with interest, in the course of a week. What I want you to do is to receive this money for me and employ it to the best advantage, receiving, of course, something for your trouble. If you consent to this you will be doing me a great kindness, for there is no one else in Orvieto in whom I care to confide. I shall ask you not to say anything about it to any one; first, because if it were known that I had such an amount of money no further alms would be given me, and next because it is folly to have to employ a notary for business which we can quite well transact by ourselves."

Juccio, delighted with the turn affairs had taken, thought that here was an easy way of becoming possessed of the whole sum, and protested himself happy to serve his friend in the way suggested. Cola then took his leave and went straight home, feeling sure that Juccio would hasten to restore the stolen bag to its hiding-place in order to receive it openly from Cola. The next day the blind beggar took

his way to the church, and found, as he had expected, that Juccio had replaced the bag of florins beneath the tile. Taking it with much satisfaction at the success of his plan, Cola hastened home whistling.

The next morning, on his way to his accustomed station, Cola met the artful Juccio, who inquired, "Whither are you going?" Said Cola, "I was going to your house." "Then," said Juccio, "I am resolved to do what you ask. Entrust your two hundred florins to me and I will invest them in cheese and salt meat, a speculation which never fails."—"Thank you," said Cola; "I am going to-day for the other hundred, and when I have bestowed them with you, you can do as you will." Juccio added, as they parted, "Let me have them soon, as I want to secure the stock before the soldiers come into the town. That will be the way to dispose of it to advantage."

The next day Cola called on Juccio, wearing downcast looks, and on Juccio bidding him "good day," he replied, "I wish it were good, or even middling."—"Why, what is the matter?" asked Juccio. "The matter," said Cola, "is that some rascal stole my hundred florins from its hiding-place; and I cannot recover a penny from my relations, so that I may eat my fingers for anything I have to expect." Juccio replied angrily, "This is just like all my speculations. I always lose where I expect to gain. If you can't advance the money, and the dealer from whom I have ordered the goods chooses to keep me to my agreement, I shall be in a nice dilemma!"—"Yes," said Cola, "I see that. As for me, I shall have to set to and amass fresh capital, which will take a long time. And when I have got it I shall be very careful neither to hide it in a hole in the floor, nor entrust it in any friend's hands."—"But," said Juccio, "if we could but recover that from your relations, we could make a good profit."—"Why, so we might, or at least you might," returned Cola. "But if I were to proceed against my relations to recover money, it would be known far and wide, and then none would give me alms. So, though I thank you for

your kindness, I fear I cannot profit by it. But I shall always consider myself as much obliged as if I had cleared a large sum. Moreover, I am going to join another unfortunate beggar who has lost his sight, and perhaps together we may in time save some money and enter upon a speculation with you."—"Well, be quick," said Juccio, "and come to me as soon as you can bring any money. You know where to find me. Farewell!"—"Farewell," said Cola, adding under his breath, "and I am well rid of you."

His good fortune continued, and soon he doubled his savings, but he no longer went near Juccio. He greatly enjoyed telling his companions of the plan by which he recovered the stolen money; invariably winding up with, "By San' Lucia! but Juccio was the blinder man of the two!"

MASUCCIO SALERNITANO, who wrote in the latter half of the fifteenth century, gave much attention to the enterprises of Don Alfonso V of Portugal against the Moors. He tells the stories of events in the preceding century as though they had recently occurred, and thus is able not only to praise the chivalrous conduct of past heroes, but also to convey delicate and stimulating compliments to his contemporaries. He took for his model the great orator and novelist, Boccaccio, but was quite original in his narratives and characters.

THE KING OF PORTUGAL AND THE NOBLE MOOR

THE splendid and chivalrous deeds of the Christian princes of Portugal in the East are celebrated throughout the world. Again and again their proud fleets have crossed the sea, bearing cavaliers to the battlefields where they wrought their glorious deeds. Most notable and worthy of commemoration was the invincible monarch Don Alfonso, who, having shared with his father the conquest of the strong city Agalser Segher, in the kingdom of Fez, proposed to besiege the great city of Arzil.

Just as the defenders had capitulated word reached Don Alfonso that a great army, under Molle Fez, was marching to the relief of the city. So he caused the entrenchments to be broken up and the bulk of his army removed, leaving only enough to maintain the siege, and set out to meet Molle Fez and his troops. At sunrise of the second day's march from Arzil the two great armies came in sight of

each other, and at once they prepared for action. A severe battle was fought, and, after enormous loss, it ended with the total defeat of the Moors. Even their commander was wounded and taken prisoner, yielding only after fighting till he could no longer raise an arm.

Such a capture was of signal moment to the Christians. They thought that with the greatest Moorish leader their prisoner, there would no longer be any sustained resistance to their arms. Hence Don Alfonso resolved, after the fall of Arzil, to keep Molle Fez in honourable captivity for life.

When the tidings reached the King of Fez he dispatched an ambassador of high rank with a splendid retinue and laden with gifts to Don Alfonso, entreating him that were he so uncourteous as to detain his noble prisoner, he would at least name some terms of ransom; and meanwhile would he accept the accompanying offerings as tokens of respect? To this the King replied that, having considered much, he was firmly resolved never to deliver up his captive, no matter what proposals were made, and that he could not in future even hear them.

When this decision reached Fez the mother of the Moorish captain determined to do something for the rescue of her beloved son, even though the State was powerless. So she made due preparations, assembled her train of ladies and many attendants, and set out for the Christian camp. When the cavalcade arrived the captains in command, much astonished, proceeded to inform the King, and directed the princess to Don Alfonso's pavilion. There he received her with great respect, and granted her audience immediately. She began thus: "I doubt not, most noble prince, that you are surprised that I should venture thus confidently to appear before you; but if Your Majesty will deign to hear the reasons which have moved me, you will be compassionate rather than displeased. I am, Your Majesty, an afflicted and unhappy mother, with no hope of comfort, save in Your Majesty's clemency and

generosity. Hence I come as a suppliant at your feet, imploring you, most noble prince, to listen to a mother's woes, and restore to her her only son, whom you hold captive. I know that no ransom can be offered for him, but I have brought you, my dear Lord, all my few possessions as outward sign and symbol of the fervent gratitude and love which your action will awaken in a mother's heart. My son and myself will hold ourselves henceforth, as far as our sacred laws permit, at the service of Your Majesty and your chivalrous followers."

The King was much struck with the courage and wisdom of the princess, and though his nobles advised him to seize her as an honourable prisoner, he replied to her, "The noble confidence you have shown in me, dearest lady, and the sorrowful motive of your coming, have so far conquered my reluctance to release my prisoner that I now freely restore him to your arms, on condition that he shall aid me in my present enterprise. Or, if he is unable to accept these terms, then that he shall no longer fight in arms against me."

The princess expressed her gratitude in most eloquent words, adding that she would not pretend to answer for her son until she had seen him, but that she and everything that she possessed would be entirely at the King's command in return for his generous boon. Also that she trusted so to influence her beloved son that he too would accept the conditions. The King, greatly pleased, commanded the Moorish captain to be sent for, and after witnessing the unbounded joy of the mother and son at their re-union, he explained to his captive the conditions on which, as his friend and ally, he might have his freedom.

Molle Fez, unmoved and without hesitation, replied, "Most excellent prince, it would be idle for me to attempt to give thanks for offers to which there can be no adequate return. But as I hold myself more bound to the laws and the service of my country than to the preservation of my life or the attainment of any advantage, I cannot put myself

under an obligation to Your Majesty which would prevent my complete service to my sovereign. I should still esteem myself a prisoner, a captive in soul, though free; and were I to serve you, both present and future times would say I had been your slave. So that I entreat you to set me free with no such conditions, or to plunge me again into captivity to terminate my days in solitude."

Don Alfonso recognized in the Moorish chieftain's words the same loftiness and nobility as in the pleas of his distinguished mother, and, fired by their noble example, the Christian monarch sprang from his seat and exclaimed, "Neither of you are my prisoners; you are free, with the whole of your treasures; without a single condition, you are free. Lady, return with your admirable son, of whom you are worthy. You threw yourself unreservedly on my mercy: to take advantage of this would be to stain my crown and my memory. It remains with yourselves to be at peace or at war with me, for I trust in my own good sword, without the aid of Molle Fez, to achieve what I have in view." The monarch then dismissed them, full of gratitude and bearing many proofs of his kindness, and they hastened joyfully to meet their friends, who expressed the utmost astonishment on seeing them. The courts and the public places were everywhere thronged to catch a sight of the mother and son as they passed along; and the Moorish King, the princes, and the whole people never ceased to praise the magnanimous virtues and chivalry of the Christian prince, Don Alfonso.

But Molle Fez and the lady did not stop there. In the ensuing season they raised a powerful army, and passed over to assist the Portuguese sovereign in his approaching campaigns. Great was his surprise and delight, and receiving his noble allies with marks of the highest favour, he ever afterwards esteemed Molle Fez as a brother. Seldom indeed were they seen apart; in battle they fought

at each other's side, in peace they were friends and companions, and such was the gratitude and loyalty of Molle Fez that he devoted himself to the interests of the Christian King, and served him with fidelity as long as he lived.

BERNARDO ILLICINI, who was a physician of Sienna in the latter part of the fifteenth century, was the author of one famous novel. Adopting the usual pleasant fiction of a special occasion for the telling of the story, he describes it as told by a gifted lady who was one of the guests at a marriage feast. When the bride and bridegroom had departed the company are represented as forming into little groups to listen to stories. The supposed narrator, herself belonging to a noble family in Sienna, treasures the memory of the chivalrous conduct of the heroes of the story.

THE TWO NOBLE GENTLEMEN OF SIENNA

ANSELMO DI MESSER SALIMBENE belonged to an ancient and powerful house of high repute in Sienna, as consisting of men who scorned to stoop to an unworthy action and women whose characters and virtues were amongst the most distinguished. Of no less worthy ancestry and report was the family of Carlo di Messer Tommaso, himself a gallant and adventurous youth of about the same age as Anselmo. The two families were for many years, however, not only politically opposed, but were also bitter personal foes, on account of an old feud arising out of a mishap of the chase.

Generations before, the representatives of the Salimbeni and the Tommasi had shared in the sport of a boar-hunt together, and, heated with excitement, fell to discussing the merits and courage of their respective hounds. Their partisanship waxed hotter and more impatient, until one of the Tommasi family struck a gentleman of the Salimbeni, and he fell dead at his feet.

As the years passed the greatness of the Salimbene family, fostered by shrewd business qualities in their head, had much increased, whilst that of the Tommaso had as much decayed. The old feud was still languidly kept up, but more as a matter of form than from any sincerity of resentment. When our story opens young Carlo was the senior representative of his house, and he had a sister of about seventeen years of age. They resided in the one estate still belonging to them, in the lovely Val di Strove, but with difficulty kept up any vestige of their ancestral splendour. In person and manners Carlo di Messer Tommaso still maintained the chivalrous reputation of his forerunners.

Near by lay the farthest estates of the Salimbene family, whose property extended over many acres; and it had happened that Anselmo had more than once beheld the fair châtelaine of his neighbour's house, and recognized her extreme charm and grace. But on account of the traditional rivalry between their families he never permitted himself to speak, even to his dearest friends, of the admiration he felt.

The peaceful trend of events was interrupted by the attempt of one of the most powerful citizens of Sienna to obtain possession of Carlo's little estate, to own it as a summer residence for his family. He applied for the purchase of it, and offered one thousand ducats; but the young Tommaso refused to entertain the proposal. By careful management he could just keep a home there for his young sister and himself, and as he had not been trained for the law or for commerce he felt he could not ensure even this in any other way. His refusal to sell his inheritance irritated the would-be purchaser, and availing himself of the political unrest in Sienna, he laid plots and intrigued against Tommaso, so that he fell under suspicion of the Council as a conspirator against the public good. His immediate arrest was ordered, and soon the sentence of death was pronounced. This, through the influence of his enemy,

who desired his estate but not his life, was commuted to the payment of one thousand florins, which was to be made within fifteen days.

Carlo, from his prison, sent for one of the city brokers, and ordered him to dispose of his estate for one thousand florins. When this was announced his enemy, yielding to his covetous instincts, and feeling that he had the wretched owner in his power, refused to pay more than seven hundred florins. This so stirred the poor prisoner that he resolved not to part with his estate for so poor a sum, which was all that his sister would have remaining, but would die innocently and uncomplainingly. His resolution taken, he resigned himself to his fate at the end of the fifteen days, feeling that no help might be expected from his few distant relatives, on account of the peril of avowing connection with a prisoner convicted of conspiracy against the State.

On the very morning which marked the end of the fifteen days Anselmo di Messer Salimbene saw with amazement and distress a party of women issue from the house of Tommaso, wearing an air of profound lamentation. He inquired into the cause, and was told that the head of the house, Carlo di Messer Tommaso, had been condemned to pay a heavy fine or to suffer death, and that the limit of time allowed was now expired. By degrees Anselmo gathered information as to what had been attempted and, deeply pondering, returned to his villa.

Then he thought over all the aspects of the case. On the one hand he reflected: "Carlo di Messer Tommaso, whose family has long borne hatred to my house, is found guilty of treachery to the Republic. If the law takes its course, my revenge and the hatred of my ancestors will alike be satisfied." The other view presented itself: "Since I am desirous of possessing for my wife the gracious girl whom this traitor calls sister, all hindrance to my will is removed with his death. I can approach a defenceless maiden with my own terms."

This reflection was no sooner made than he sprang up impatiently, shaking his head as one troubled with some tiresome encumbrance. "What!" he exclaimed aloud, "do I permit myself to meditate a course impossible to an honourable man? Shame on me to think thus to dishonour my birth and to present myself to the gentle Angelica as a tyrant and a villain! What if her family once injured mine! She is guiltless; her brother is guiltless. I will adopt a magnanimous course, and trust to fortune to bestow on me what I most desire."

His decision taken, he at once obtained from his steward a thousand ducats, and hastened to the chamberlain appointed to receive the prisoners' fines. "Behold," he said, "a thousand gold ducats to pay the fine of Carlo Tommaso; be quick and give me a receipt, or it will be too late to set him at liberty." And he waited not for the difference between the thousand ducats and the thousand florins in order to speed at once with the document of receipt to the Governor of the prison.

He, receiving the evidence of acquitment, ordered the prisoner to be brought before him. Carlo was momently expecting the summons for an interview with his confessor before taking his way to the scaffold, and, bewildered, inquired of the Governor the cause of his being sent for.

"I summon you," was the reply, "to witness the order for your release, which I hold in my hand. The prison doors are no longer closed upon you."

Carlo, overwhelmed with amazement, stood silent for a while. Then he asked, "By whose means am I free?"

But to this the Governor professed himself not able to give an answer; and Carlo left the prison unaware as to who had procured his release. Travelling homewards, he arrived at Val di Strove towards midnight, and the house was shut. As he hastened to knock he heard from within sounds of lamentation, and amongst them his sister's voice.

"Let me come in, dear Angelica," he called; "it is your brother Carlo."

With the utmost joy Angelica flew to the door and greeted her returned brother, whom she had believed to be dead. Together they rejoiced, and slowly convinced themselves that the anguish they had passed through was over and done. The next day, as the tidings spread, many friends and acquaintances sought the house of the brother and sister with congratulations and welcome. It was with something of disgust that Carlo found that to none of these was his deliverance owing.

Soon he seized an opportunity to visit the chamberlain in charge of the prison exchequer, and inquired with apparent indifference as to who had paid the thousand florins' fine and thus restored him to liberty. The chamberlain replied, "I am happy to be able to inform you, Messer Carlo, that it was Anselmo di Messer Salimbene who called and paid the fine. Moreover, he would not even wait for the difference between the ducats and the florins, observing that it was your wish to pay the full thousand ducats. But the surplus is here at your service if it is your wish now to receive it."

"If that is so," said Tommaso, "the affair is quite satisfactory. I desire no kind of restitution."

As he walked homewards he reflected on the unexpected event which had led to his freedom, and felt that the generous deed of Anselmo was done rather for the sake of his beautiful young sister than for his own. Arriving at his house, he went to his sister and said, "My dear Angelica, you can hardly guess that the benefactor who has set me free and relieved you of a painful and friendless position is no other than Anselmo di Messer Salimbene, our hereditary foe. Regardless of the wrongs and indignities which our house has put upon his in the past, he has become my surety, and in the most delicate manner has withdrawn from all recognition of his kind action. I am convinced, my sister, that he has done this purely out of esteem and affection for you."

The beautiful Angelica, much startled and moved by this

recital, and overjoyed to have her brother with her once again, acknowledged the generous and delicate service of Anselmo; and when her brother further proposed that they should go that same evening to his house, and express their lasting gratitude to their silent benefactor, she readily agreed.

When they appeared at Salimbene's villa and were admitted, Anselmo greeted them with much surprise; and leading them through a noble suite of rooms to his study, he ordered refreshments to be brought.

Carlo di Messer Tommaso began at once with youthful impetuosity, "Noble sir, I learn that I am debtor to you for my life, and my sister here, therefore, for her protection and happiness. Pray believe that we are really grateful, and if our family were what it once was we should have rejoiced to return the obligation as soon as may be. But we are quite unable to do this; and out of our poor subsistence it will be many years before we can acquit ourselves of the debt. But at least we acknowledge it, and desire to express our sincere gratitude, and to hold ourselves at your service in any way that you may please."

Anselmo protested that it had been a happiness to him to be able to serve two persons whom he respected and esteemed so highly. "And," he concluded, "when you have refreshed yourselves I will ask you to consider favourably some proposals which I have to make." He then withdrew, and sent messengers to request the immediate presence of several of his oldest friends, members of the great houses of Sienna and its neighbourhood. Impressed by the urgency of the summons, they quickly responded, and a few hours later Carlo and his sister were asked to present themselves in the great hall of the villa. There they found a considerable company assembled, and Anselmo, advancing, conducted them to the principal seats, and thus addressed the assemblage:

"My very kind and dear friends, gracious ladies, and noble citizens, I doubt not you are desirous to hear upon

what occasion I have thus summoned you together. You are all aware that my ancestors and those of Carlo di Messer Tommaso were at bitter enmity together. Pity it is that ancestors of mine should have nourished resentment against those who could bequeath such noble spirit and virtue to their descendants as these two, my honest friends, exhibit. I have long admired and revered the grace and beauty of the lady Angelica, but might never have devised a way to overstep the feud between our two houses. Circumstances, unkind enough to Carlo di Messer Tommaso, but friendly to me, gave me the opportunity to perform a natural action in rescuing him, by the payment of a sum of money, from a position of undeserved indignity. I rejoiced to be able to do this small thing. But, my friends, such is the noble liberality of spirit of my friend and his beautiful sister, that in accepting my poor service, they declare the profoundest gratitude, and hold themselves at my service henceforth."

He paused for a moment, and the assembled company murmured words of commendation and applause as they regarded the three young actors in this unusual scene. Carlo looked from one to another in eager recognition of Anselmo's modest declaration, whilst Angelica, her eyes filled with tears, realized again to what a miracle she owed her brother's safety.

Anselmo went on, "Honoured and dear friends, I take you to witness that here and now I do ask for the hand of the lady Angelica in marriage. I have had no opportunity of finding out her sentiments towards me, and should they be unfavourable I accept my dismissal from her lips. But in homage to the noble character of the house with which I desire to ally myself, I beg to offer, thus publicly, myself and all that I possess for her gracious acceptance."

Here he advanced towards Angelica and, stooping, reverently kissed her hand. Then turning to the rest he said smilingly, "The lady's answer will be made known to you later. She shall not be hurried into a decision by any inconsiderate haste of mine." The elder members of the

party conferred together, and the younger ones surrounded Anselmo with congratulations and laughter, whilst the ladies made a group about the fair Angelica. Carlo's special friends inquired eagerly of him as to how and when the glad news of his release was conveyed to him.

Then Anselmo approached Angelica, and the ladies led her forward to receive from him upon her finger a beautiful espousal ring. Turning to the spectators he announced, "Methinks it would be in ill accord with my Angelica's beauty and the fame of her house that she should come to me dowerless save for her unparalleled beauty and virtue. Be witness, therefore, my gentle and courteous friends, that I here endow her with one-fourth of all my possessions; apportioning an equal share also to her brother Carlo for his sole benefit and use."

Murmurs of applause and heartfelt approbation broke from the assembly, who rejoiced in the noble and spirited conduct of the two young men, by means of which, together with the virtues and charms of Angelica, the long-standing feud between two ancient and honourable houses was ended.

A STORY by Giraldi Cinthio, secretary to the Duke of Ferrara in the sixteenth century. It is one of a set of One Hundred Stories supposed to be told by the members of a party of ladies and gentlemen fleeing from Rome to escape the great pestilence that followed the sack of the city. They are embarked on a ship for Marseilles.

THE STORY OF THE COVETOUS MERCHANT

A CERTAIN Greek merchant of Corfu, who travelled much in Italy to sell his goods, at length settled in Mantua. His name was Filargiro, and he was very rich and determined to become still richer. His shrewdness helped him to drive good bargains, and he was not dishonest in his business. But the older he grew the more resolute he became to lose no opportunity of adding to his store of gold.

One day, after completing a sale in which he had made a very satisfactory profit, he was returning home with a bag of four hundred gold crowns, and was so unfortunate as to lose it. On arriving at his house he went to add the new sum to his chest containing many thousand crowns, and found that his bag of gold was gone! Exclaiming aloud in astonishment and vexation, he searched wildly in all his pockets, but with no success. He then set out to retrace his steps along the way he had come, asking the passers-by, and almost the very dogs, if they had seen, or seized upon, his treasure.

He found himself arrived at the scene of his bargain

with no success, and was almost overwhelmed with despair. He then suddenly bethought him to appeal to the Marquis of Mantua, and hastened to lay his hard case before the guardian of the city. The Marquis received him with courtesy, and granted his urgent request that a public crier should be sent round announcing the loss, and declaring a reward of forty crowns to the finder who should recover his treasure.

Meanwhile the leather bag of crowns had been found by a humble and pious old lady as she returned from service in the church. She was one of a band devoted to religion, although not of a professed order, and, besides attending all the services with great regularity and fervour, they were accustomed to walk in the streets with their eyes cast down to avoid distraction of thought. In this way she, and not some sharp-sighted youth, found the bag of coins in the roadway, and finding when she reached home that they were of considerable value, she became anxious and fearful as to how to restore the treasure to its owner.

Hence it was with much relief that she heard the crier's proclamation, and hastened at once to the castle to hand over the bag to the Marquis. Being very poor, she rejoiced to think that she might receive the forty crowns offered as the reward, though the whole four hundred would have burdened her conscience. The Marquis, observing her condition, kindly asked her how she gained her living and what friends she had. She replied, "I have nothing but what I gain by the work of my hands and the help of one daughter; we weave and spin, Signor, to earn as much as we want, living in the fear of the Lord. We are happy, my Lord, but I must die before long, and I would fain see my daughter married first, were I but able to give her a portion."

The Marquis was touched by the unassuming sincerity and honesty, as it seemed to him that she must have been

tempted to keep the whole of the treasure and thus provide the marriage portion. He commended her, and said that he feared many of the sons and daughters of Mantua would have failed to conduct themselves so uprightly. He then commanded the merchant, Filargiro, to be sent for, and told him that his treasure was found, and that he might at once bestow the promised reward upon the finder.

The miserly owner fell upon his recovered wealth with rapture, nearly weeping with delight as he handled the bag and felt its weight. But when the Marquis again mentioned the forty crowns reward, his face fell and he began to think how he could evade payment. He requested opportunity to count the pieces of gold, and spent a considerable time in counting and replacing them two or three times. Then he returned to the poor woman and informed her that there were thirty-four ducats short of the number that should have been there.

Much distressed and confused at this insinuation, she turned to the Marquis, exclaiming, "Oh, Signor, can it be possible that he accuses me of stealing thirty-four ducats, when I had it in my power to possess myself of the whole, and did not?" The Marquis requested the merchant to count them again, and while he was doing so he charged the poor woman to rest and to calm her mind. "Undoubtedly," he said, "it is some error in counting." She was soothed by his kindness, and protested, "Noble Signor, believe me that, as I value my hopes of heaven, I have restored the exact sum which was in the bag when I found it; not a single coin have I taken out."

When the miser returned into court he again asserted that the amount was thirty-four ducats short, and that she must consider them a sufficient reward for bringing back the rest. The Marquis, considering the matter, recollected that when he announced his loss he said nothing about the ducats, but mentioned only the four hundred crowns. The merchant, however, now declared that they were in the

bag with the crowns, although he had not mentioned them in his distress.

The Marquis was convinced that this was a covetous device to avoid giving the promised reward, and thought of a plan to defeat it. He said to the merchant, "Why did you not mention the full amount of your loss before proclaiming the reward?"

"I overlooked it; I quite forgot it," was the reply.

"But," said the Marquis, "it seems strange that you, who appear to be particular about trifles, should not have remembered the ducats. As far as I can understand, you wish to recover what is not your own. This bag of gold could never have belonged to you at all, since your money is not to be found in it. I imagine the real owner to be myself, since a servant of mine lost exactly the sum here contained on the very day on which you say you lost yours."

The Marquis then turned to the old woman, observing, "Since it is clear that the money is not this merchant's, but mine, and you have had the good luck to find it, pray keep it. The whole is your own; present it as a wedding gift to your daughter if you like. But should you happen to meet with another bag containing ducats as well as crowns, I beg you will give it up to this gentleman at once, without asking for any reward."

The poor lady thanked the Marquis tremblingly and promised to observe his directions. The wretched merchant declared that he was quite willing to pay the reward he had promised if she restored the remaining money, which he was convinced was his own. But the Marquis assumed an angry air, exclaiming, "Get out of my presence; and beware how you exasperate me further. If this good woman happens to find your purse with the exact amount you mention she will return it to you untouched. That, I think, is enough."

The unhappy Filargiro, unable to utter a word, was compelled to leave the place, full of regret that his

love of money had made him over-reach himself. The poor woman hastened home with joy, and presenting her daughter with the dowry, was able to bring about the long-deferred wedding with the lover to whom she was betrothed.

ORTENSIO LANDO was a physician of Milan in the middle of the sixteenth century and, in imitation of the great Boccaccio, wrote stories. The following story is one of his.

THE ASTROLOGER OF VERONA

THERE was once a gentleman of Verona named Messer Ugo da Santa Sofia, who, being wealthy and a lover of science, devoted himself to the study of astrology. His mastery of the movements of the heavenly bodies led him to speak with certainty of the planets, the fixed and wandering stars, the comets, and the various satellites of the greater orbs. Soon he became renowned throughout the country. Beyond this he was able also to foretell, by means, it was supposed, of the starry motions, things that should happen on the earth. Thus he prophesied the death of King Robert and the accession of a woman to the throne. He also announced the extension of the kingdom of Hungary, the borders of which, he predicted, were to extend as far as Greece. He further anticipated the terrible pestilence of the year 1348, which, it will be remembered, spread from the Continent to the British Isles, and was there known as the Black Death.

By degrees his fame spread throughout Europe, and most of the princes of Christendom at some time or other consulted him as to the signs of the times so far as they themselves were concerned. Thus he became not a little vain of his unusual powers, and believed himself to be infallible.

Now it so happened that one day during the harvest time he went down to his country house, for he much en-

joyed watching the reaping and the thrashing of the corn and the other field operations of the season. Soon after his arrival a well-to-do villager, living near his farm, called upon him. He was slightly infirm in the feet, and rode a beautiful Syrian ass. Dismounting at Messer Ugo's door, he was shown in, and explained, "I have called upon you, Messer Ugo, as I was riding by, to say that I think it would be prudent of you to hasten the gathering of your corn. It has been cut for some days, and I think the weather threatening. Within a few hours there will be a tremendous storm, in which the very heavens are like to fall in rain."

Messer Ugo, unbelieving and not best pleased, thanked the farmer coldly, and asked him carelessly how it was he thought himself skilled to penetrate the fair omens he saw around them. Casting a glance around the horizon, he went on, "The sky is quite clear, the sun mild, not even a cloud upon the mountains, and yet you are bold enough to foretell a storm! Why there is a soft south wind blowing, and the sun is in the right sign and the right degree; nothing less than a miracle can make it rain. Nature herself could not make it rain now; to be sure, with the help of Providence, she might, but as she stands disposed at present, it is impossible that we should have rain."

His caller was unshaken in his conviction, and could only repeat that the wise farmer would hasten the ingathering of the corn while yet the fine hours lasted. But Messer Ugo would not hear of such a thing and continued to point out the various indications of settled weather. When he found that his reasons and his arguments alike made no impression, he became annoyed, being unaccustomed to hear his wisdom doubted or to receive advice. Presently his anger rose, so that he had difficulty in refraining from cuffing the ear of the obdurate countryman.

From this, however, he did restrain himself and, controlling his indignation, ordered his telescopes and other apparatus to be set up, and examined the heavens care-

fully. His inspection finished, he remained convinced that for that day, at least, rain was out of the question, and announced that he would as soon "expect to see mountains levelled with the plains, or the rivers flowing over the hills." So the farmer took his leave and rode homewards. He had scarcely dismounted before a dark speck in the sky moved rapidly up from the horizon, spread and developed until it obscured the sun. Then strong lightnings began to play towards the north, and the wind, veering round to the east, brought with it torrents of rain.

Heavier and heavier it fell, in torrents and waterspouts rather than in drops; the thunder rolled, the lightning flashed vividly, and every one fled in consternation for shelter. Such reverberations may have been heard when the fierce Titans, rising in rash revolt, felt the indignation of mighty Jove.

Towers and steeples fell, buildings tottered, tall trees lay prostrate; the River Adige rose and burst its embankments, and the swollen flood wrought more and more devastation on its course. The proudest princes in secure palaces trembled with fear that even their homes would be swept away. Deeply mortified, and then thoroughly alarmed, Messer Ugo wished that he had never possessed his astrological wisdom to be thus tricked by the weather! His acres of yellow corn were swept away and rioted in the flood, his servants clustered terrified in barns and shelters, thinking the end of the world had come.

Utterly miserable and humiliated, Messer Ugo flung away his telescope, his square and compasses, his astrolabe and his sheets of calculations, and watched eagerly for some abatement in the tempest, that he might go to his rustic neighbour, entreat his pardon, and ask by what art he had been able to predict the storm. At length he thought it safe to make the attempt, and after sore buffetings with the wind, and many perils from falling branches and swirling streams, he knocked at the farmer's door. "By what means," he panted, as he was let in, "have you ac-

quired such wonderful knowledge? There must be some master in the art superior to myself to whom you have applied."

"That is very true, Messer Ugo," replied the farmer; "I have consulted him. He is no other than the fine ass on which you saw me mounted. He it is whom I always consult as to the weather, and I have never known him wrong."

Messer Ugo, exhausted and troubled, believed that his neighbour was deriding him, but he was too disturbed to speak, and the farmer went on: "No glass or compass could reveal to me the intentions of the heavens so clearly as he does. When the weather is going to be extremely rough he sets up his back, his hairs stand on end, he hides his tail between his legs, and shakes as though with ague. If we are merely going to have a moderate breeze it is quite another thing: then he only occasionally hides his tail between his legs, lashing his sides at times; if there is going to be no thunder and lightning he will hardly do so much. But when we are going to be visited with a fierce tempest, such as this to-day, he gives warning enough. He first of all directed his ears and eyes towards the sky; he stopped and listened; then he leaped up and beat the earth with his four feet, as if fleas were devouring him. So I thought I would come along and give you our opinion upon the weather, as all your corn lay cut."

Messer Ugo murmured something indistinctly, and the farmer continued: "Nor should you, Messer Ugo, with all your vast stores of learning, be surprised at this. For does not the cock inform us of the hour, as though he had a little piece of watch-work in his head? Do not the dolphins at sea gambol before the vessel, and thus warn the luckless sailors of the coming storm? Why should not my ass be supposed to know something of what has always concerned him and his ancestors?"

Messer Ugo de Santa Sofia had not a word to say in reply. He could but feel admiration for the unfailing

instinct of the ass, although it seemed that the animal was a greater astrologer than himself. He entreated the good Carabotto not to publish abroad the fact that he had been given warning of the coming storm, lest his reputation should suffer. This the good-natured farmer readily promised, but somehow the story got abroad, and everywhere it was said that Carabotto's ass had turned out a greater astrologer than Messer Ugo de Santa Sofia. Soon it gave rise to a proverb. A very argumentative supporter of his own opinion would have retorted to him, "Yes, I dare say; you think you know more astrology than Carabotto's ass!" Or an ineffective talker would be reminded, "Go! go! you know less than poor Messer Ugo himself!"

When Santa Sofia became aware that the story was common property he was so enraged that he destroyed and burnt more than two thousand crowns' worth of astrological instruments and books. Also ever thereafter he walked with his eyes fixed on the ground, refusing to behold the sky, which had so betrayed him.

MATTEO BANDELLO, a gentleman of Milan, amused his leisure hours by writing historical stories, of which this is one. It is supposed to be told by a merchant.

THE GREAT PALACE

IT is not necessary, dear friends and noble patrons, to use so many kind entreaties; I am always willing to give an account of my most remarkable adventures. You are aware that I have been a traveller from the time I was a boy of fifteen, when I set out from my native city of Genoa with Messer Nicolo Cattanio. His large mercantile connection induced him to visit different parts of Barbary. With him I first arrived at the city of Orano, on the shores of the Mediterranean, belonging to the kingdom of the same name. Many Genoese merchants travelled thither, so much so that it was known as the "Lodge of the Genoese."

My friend Messer Cattanio was known and much respected in Orano, and even the King showed him favour, granting him various privileges in return for the many and various ways in which the Genoese commerce had benefited his subjects. For several years I resided in that city, becoming familiar with the language, manners, and customs of the people; and at length I was invited to join a party of Oranese merchants.

With them I made a commercial tour through many of the great and populous cities of Africa. In several of these we found seminaries of instruction, with regular professors of different sciences, paid and appointed by the people; hospitals for the relief of the impoverished and distressed, and homes and refuges for the helpless supported entirely

by the alms of the charitable. Indeed, I solemnly aver that I met with more instances of true charity and kindness from what are termed these uncivilized people than I ever had the good fortune to do amongst those who are called Christians.

Among other splendid places I visited a noble city built in the age of King Mansor, who had likewise been supreme Pontifex, or high priest of Morocco. Some of their national chronicles were here exhibited to me, composed in the Arabic character ; and their fulness bore out the diligence with which they keep the records of public events. As I could read the language with ease, I amused myself with studying some of them, especially those relating to the times of King Mansor.

I thence learned that he was intensely fond of hunting, and that one day on an excursion in the chase he was surprised by a terrific storm which, with irresistible fury, laid waste both corn and pasture-land and dispersed his retinue on all sides seeking shelter. King Mansor, separated from his courtiers, mistook his way, and wandered alone in the forest till nightfall. The storm still raged and, as darkness was closing in, he reined in his steed, doubtful which way he had better proceed. The inky blackness of the sky was relieved only by sheets of flashing lightning, and the way seemed so perilous that he feared to go further lest he might ride into a marsh or pitfall. For a time he stood still, vainly trying to pierce the darkness with his gaze, and then going on hesitatingly a few steps, he saw almost directly in front of him a light gleaming not far from the ground.

It was from the window of a poor fisherman's hut, who gained his livelihood by catching eels in the pools of the marshes ; and the man hastened forward when he heard the King's shout of joy. In reply to King Mansor's inquiry as to the nearest way to the King's court, the fisherman replied, " The King's court is ten long miles distant from this place."

"I will make it worth your while to show me the way thither," said the traveller.

"Though you were King Mansor himself," said the man, "who asked me I would not venture upon it at this hour of night, and such a night as this is. For were I to do it, even at his command, I might lead our honoured monarch to destruction."

"Is it so perilous?" asked the other.

"The waters are out and the night is too dark to see any landmarks," was the reply.

"But why, my friend, should you be so solicitous for the safety of your sovereign if he required this service of you?" asked the traveller.

"Because," replied the fisherman, "I honour him more than I do any one else, and love him more than myself."

"But what good has he ever done you?" was the incredulous question. "Why should you hold him in such esteem? Methinks you would have better lodging and clothing if you were any favourite of his."—"Not so," was the reply. "For what greater favour can I receive of my honoured King, in my humble lot, than to be protected in the enjoyment of my house and goods and the little earnings I can make?" His listener pondered and bowed his head, while the man went on: "All I have I owe to him, to the wisdom and justice with which he rules over his subjects, preserving us in peace or protecting us in war from the inroads of the Arabs and other enemies. Even I, a poor fisherman, am not forgotten, and enjoy my poverty in peace. I fish for eels where I please, I sell them in the best market I can find, and unmolested I carry home my earnings to my wife and little ones. To the King I am indebted for this freedom and security, and daily I offer up my prayers to God and His holy Prophet for his preservation. But, sir! here am I talking while you stand dripping, exposed to this pitiless storm. Deign to come within, and to-morrow I will lead you to the King or wherever else you please."

So King Mansor dismounted and entered the humble dwelling, whilst his horse was placed in a little outhouse beside the fisherman's ass. Soon a good fire was blazing, and the royal traveller dried himself and rested whilst the goodwife prepared and cooked some eels for supper. His Majesty, however, had a great distaste for fish, and asked whether there was no kind of meat which he might have instead. The fisherman honestly acknowledged that he possessed a she-goat with a kid, and perceiving that his guest was a worthy and dignified person he offered to serve up the kid to table. When it was ready he presented the King with the most delicate and delicious parts and respectfully waited upon him. After supper the weary monarch lay down upon a couch of fern and bracken and slept dreamlessly until the sun was up.

Again mounting his steed and with his host as guide he set forth on his journey home. They had not gone far beyond the dangerous marshes when they met several of the King's party anxiously searching for their royal master. Great was their joy at his recovery safe and well, and he graciously assured them that he had been well entertained. Then, turning to the poor fisherman, he informed him that he was himself the King to whose praises he had listened the night before, and that the man's kindly courtesy and good will should not go unrewarded.

Now all around these parts were many hunting-lodges which the King had erected for convenience in his expeditions on the chase; and many of his nobles had similarly enriched the country with pleasant dwellings. Intending to remunerate handsomely the fisherman who had so kindly sheltered him, the King ordered all the intervening ports and marshes to be drained, and ways to be made so that easy access might be had from one of these lodges to another. He then circumscribed about them the limits of a noble city and had a wall constructed. Lastly he conferred upon it many privileges and immunities, and named the whole place the *Cesar Elcabir*, or the Great Palace, and

presented it to the fisherman for his own demesne in token of gratitude for his entertainment.

By the time of King Mansor's death and the succession of his sons there was no other city throughout the royal dominions to compare in greatness and splendour with *Cesar Elcabir*. During the time that I sojourned there it was filled with merchants, artists, and artisans of every description. The mosques were grand, and no less impressive were the colleges and hospitals. Many large public conduits supplied the place of the wells which are usually lacking in these cities .The inhabitants were men of liberal and dignified manners, neat and unassuming in their dress and way of life, and of singular uprightness and integrity.

The city is famous, too, for its gardens, which are so spacious and abundantly supplied that their produce made a weekly market for all the surrounding country. It is not above eighteen miles from Azella, now called Arzilla, in the possession of the Portuguese; and though some cities may claim a more extraordinary and unnatural origin, none surely has one more honourable than that of *Cesar Elcabir*.

ANTON-FRANCESCO DONI, a Florentine gentleman of the early sixteenth century, was wont to amuse himself, after the manner of his countrymen, with writing verses and stories.

THE HUNCHBACKS

LONG years ago the Dowager-Queen of Salimspruch had one daughter, Galierina, aged five years. The young Princess, walking in the garden with her governess one day, found a pretty little lizard. Delighted with her treasure, she carried it indoors with her, and presently entering the royal apartments, ran to her mother in excitement and threw the lizard on her lap. The Queen, greatly startled, cried angrily that to have terrified her thus with an ugly reptile was unpardonable, and that as a punishment she should keep the lizard and be banished from her presence, and, moreover, should have no suitor and no dowry until the lizard had grown as big as herself!

Now the governess of the Princess, the Donna Spira, was greatly attached to her fair charge, and feeling indignantly that an innocent act of childish thoughtlessness was being most severely punished, set herself to mitigate its harshness all she could. She knew it was useless to plead with the haughty Queen-Dowager, and hence determined to set herself to make it possible for Her Majesty to escape from the evil effects of her vow with dignity. Living retired with the Princess, she devoted herself to the task of training and educating the child and at the same time to feeding the lizard and encouraging its growth.

So successful was she in both particulars that, whilst the

Princess became daily more accomplished, gracious, and beautiful, the lizard increased marvellously in size. As the years passed the little creature grew and grew, to the general amazement, until it was nearly as large as a crocodile, and lived the treasured pet and wonder of the palace. Her Majesty the Queen was greatly touched and amazed when Donna Spira, begging an audience, revealed to her the possibility of avoiding the cruelty involved in her rash vow of years ago. She commended Donna Spira and embraced her beautiful daughter, looking upon her with approval and hearing her speak with delight.

But the Queen determined that after so many years of retirement, in which none had known of her daughter's beauty and grace, she must not permit suitors haphazard to approach her. So she desired a test of sagacity, which she believed would sift out at least the foolish princes from among them. She ordered the lizard to be killed and its lungs withdrawn.

"Now," said she, "we will proclaim a grand feast and tournament, and invite all the cavaliers of the world to try their fortune in the joust; and whoever afterwards guesses the name of the reptile which possessed these lungs, let him have my daughter for his wife and half my kingdom as her dowry."

Far and wide, throughout all cities and countries, the happy tidings spread of the royal tournament and the coming marriage of the daughter of Queen Pilessa. Then there assembled magnificent trains of lords and dukes, counts and marquesses, of all ages and nations; and long they fought, and fell, and conquered. When the contests were all over the victors were invited to behold the lungs of the lizard exhibited on view; and proclamation was made that whatsoever prince or lord should declare to what animal those relics belonged should be entitled to wed the Princess, who would have half the kingdom as her dowry.

Upon this the beholders hastened to name almost every

creature in the world but the right one, until it came to the turn of the handsome Duke of Milesi, whose prowess in the tourneys had won him great fame, and whose advances were favoured by the Donna Spira. This lady, thinking to ensure his success, cast round how to convey to him the right answer; and, seeing one of the very ugliest hunchbacks that were ever seen amongst the curious spectators, she commanded him to her presence. His affliction, she was sure, would make him guiltless of any pretensions himself; so, beckoning him to approach, she said, "If you will promise to be secret I will make you the richest Hunchback that ever lived. You have only to be wise and keep silence." He promised, and she handed him a purse of ducats, saying, "Hasten to the Duke of Milesi and whisper him that the lungs are the lungs of a lizard."

Again protesting secrecy, the Hunchback left her presence and set himself to decide whether he would keep his promise or use the knowledge himself and thus become possessed of half the kingdom and a beautiful bride. He soon determined to use the information himself, and, hastening to the Queen, he demanded audience. When he was admitted to the royal presence he bowed low and began thus: "Your gracious Majesty, knowing that your royal blood was ever faithful to its engagements, and relying on the honour of your crown, I appear before you to say to what creature belonged the precious relics exhibited here. In return I claim the Princess, your daughter, for my bride, and the half of your kingdom for her dowry."

"Certainly it is so," said the Queen, confident that the Hunchback would guess wrongly.

"Madam," he said, "the lungs are the lungs of a lizard"; and all the nobles and courtiers burst into a loud laugh.

"Nay," said the Hunchback, "let those laugh that win. I myself once had a lizard which grew as large as my back, till, putting it to bed one night without its nightcap on, it took such a bad cold that it died of suffocation." Here the company laughed still louder, thinking they had

a capital jester in the person of the Hunchback. "Good!" they cried; "very good! Was ever anything like it? Go on with your tale."

He went on: "I had it dissected after its death and found that its lungs were just like those exhibited; so I know I am right."

The Queen very gravely replied, "So far fortune has favoured you, and I am bound to fulfil my promise. Truly the hand of my daughter and the half of my kingdom shall be yours." Then the unsuccessful suitors withdrew, murmuring and displeased that so hideous a man should be so skilled in the knowledge they lacked; whilst the Hunchback was arrayed in courtly robes and acknowledged as the future spouse of the Princess. Most carefully too he was guarded, for many of the disappointed knights and warriors would have laid rough hands upon him if they could, so irate were they with his cunning and success.

The Donna Spira, when she beheld, instead of the gallant cavalier the Duke of Milesi, about her mistress, the forbidding figure of the Hunchback, could hardly contain her wrath. Casting upon him the eye of a basilisk, she murmured to herself, "Oh! villain of a Hunchback; but I will make thee pay dearly for this!" And she consulted with the unhappy Princess, her charge, as to how they might not only delay the marriage but finally prevent it.

Meanwhile, in the round of entertainments which were set on foot to celebrate the coming betrothal, there flocked to the court a large number of hunchbacks, delighted with the royal festival of their companion and desirous to share in the honour. They performed wonderful feats of jugglery, tumbling, and legerdemain, and gave much amusement to the idle spectators. The fortunate suitor, however, treated them haughtily, and when in their pranks they offended his dignity he treated them roughly and ordered them away to the kitchens.

This harsh conduct grieved the gentle Princess, and she gave orders that these amusing performers should be

invited to appear another day when her future husband should be engaged elsewhere. This was done, and the hunchbacks amused the Princess with their many tricks, and showed much genuine, if uncouth, respect and homage to herself. She was about to present them with gifts of costly apparel when trumpets announcing the return of the bridegroom were heard. In order to avoid his anger she ordered them to secrete themselves in the great chests from which the rich robes were being taken, and they did so. Not one of the three imprisoned hunchbacks betrayed his presence by so much as a sigh; but the unwelcomed suitor stayed on and on, talking boastfully of his hunting prowess and his plans for a new palace. At length he withdrew, and the impatient Princess hastened to raise the lids where the unfortunate performers must be sorely needing air.

To her horror and dismay each one was suffocated, and lay still and dead in the chest into which he had climbed! She consulted with the Donna Spira, who, after much thought, confided in a faithful courtier, and gave him many ducats wherewith to cover any necessary expenses he might incur. He at once procured three large bags exactly alike, and calling to a stout porter, "Follow me!" hastened back to the palace.

There the Princess Galierina anxiously awaited him, and in her presence he thrust one of the little hunchbacks into a bag. Then he commanded the porter: "Carry this sack away just as it is, and throw it into the river. Here are ten ducats. Take heed that the sack does not open; and when you come back you shall have twenty ducats more." The porter threw the burden on his shoulder, saying cheerily, "I wish I had more such jobs as this," and marched off to the river. Flinging his burden far into the stream, he hurried back to the palace. In the chamber where he stood there lay the bundle he thought he had disposed of, the courtier having placed the second poor victim in readiness. Assuming an air of surprise, this

gentleman said, "Do not be alarmed, but truly he is a sly villain and delights to plague people. This time you must take better care. Don't just throw it in; sink it!"

Once again he made his way to the river, and flung his heavy load right into the strong current, staying awhile to see it fairly sink. "I think you are really gone at last!" he exclaimed, and returned to the palace. In the same place there awaited him still the self-same sack! Seizing it in great anger, he bore it away, and once out of the crowd, in a remote passage, he determined to see what kind of thing it was to give him such trouble. When on opening the bag he saw the ugly hunchback, he cried, "Oh! thou wretch! But I will end thee now!" This time he pushed into the sack a number of heavy stones and lumps of iron, threw it into the river, and once again made his way back to the palace.

Crossing the outer courtyard, he saw the figure of the future bridegroom hastening to pay his duty to his lady, and the porter believed it to be the occupant of each of the sacks which he had three times striven to make away with. "Ah! villain Hunchback!" he exclaimed, "here thou art before me again!" and seizing him with all his great strength, he hoisted him upon his shoulders and bore him off. "Three times you have made me return," he shouted, "and yet you are at it again. This time we shall see who has the best of it!"

In vain the poor, struggling Hunchback tried to say that he was the chief guest at the palace, that he was visiting the Princess, that he had never seen the porter before; and in vain, too, endeavoured to bribe him to set him free. He was borne along the bridge and flung into the river. Then the porter returned to the palace, half fearing that he would have to make yet another journey. Arrived there, he was relieved to find his burden no longer awaiting him, but instead the Princess, who, handing him twenty ducats, said, "I do not think he will return again. Fare you well."

"He has returned times enough," said the porter. "Just

now I overtook him coming in at the gate, and in spite of all his promises and bribes I carried him off and pitched him into the river. So I think I have earned my wages well, making four such journeys as those."

Upon hearing this the Princess Galierina and the Donna Spira rejoiced greatly that the cunning of the Hunchback had at last been outwitted. They gave liberal presents to the porter, and promised to say nothing about his blunder, whilst life in the palace became gay and mirthful, untroubled by the presence of the unwelcome guest. In due season the Duke of Milesi approached the beautiful Princess and sought her hand on the score of his honourable record in tournaments and the field; and thus was her childish error happily retrieved.

A STORY BY SER GIORNATE DI MESSER SEBASTIANO ERIZZO OF VENICE

THE COURAGEOUS LADY ARSINOË

WHILE Nicocles the Tyrant was ruling Sicyon, and making intolerable the lives of its citizens by his harsh exactions, two brave men were there who resolved to free the city of its oppressor. After much debating and consideration they resolved that the death alone of the Tyrant would effect any amelioration in the condition of the people. Hence they laid careful plans, and arranged to await the coming of Nicocles in a certain retired glade of the palace gardens.

Then, suddenly, one of the conspirators, seized with a panic, refused to go on further in the matter; and, lest vengeance should be taken upon him, he hastened to the palace and betrayed the plot to Nicocles himself. To protect himself he made out that he had consented to the plot in the first instance only in order that he might get the evil-minded conspirator into his power, and so save Nicocles from his peril. The Tyrant, hearing this, accepted it fully, and ordered a band of guards to go at once to the house of Timocrates and arrest him. He was seized and carried before Nicocles, who taunted him with his betrayal, the ill success of his plans, and the punishment and tortures in store for him. He then ordered his captive to be thrust into one of the worst and most loathsome dungeons pending his good pleasure.

Imprisoned there in damp and darkness, the citizen

Timocrates collected his thoughts and prepared to meet his doom. He assured himself that he had known, on undertaking the task, the peril he incurred; that to have succeeded would have won him the fame of a patriot who rid his countrymen of a tyrant, and that to have failed was to die the painful death of a traitor. The thing that distressed him most was the anguish of his beloved wife at his loss, and the one feeling of bitterness which he indulged was against his fellow-citizen and companion who had played him false.

It was the custom that criminals condemned to death should suffer at night, when their cries from the massive dungeons would not be heard by passers-by; and soon the tidings spread that Timocrates the traitor was to die on the following night. His sad wife, Arsinoë, hearing the dread news, fainted with horror; but, soon coming to herself, resolved, if possible, to save him and, if need be, to suffer in his stead. She knew well the uselessness of making any plea to Nicocles, for never had the Tyrant been known to show mercy to those within his power. So she devised another plan.

As twilight approached on the evening when her beloved husband was to die, she dressed herself with care, hid her beautiful face with a thick veil, and covering her robes completely with a dark cloak, set forth to the castle. On reaching the gate she implored the guard to permit her to see her husband for a few moments for the last time. His heart was moved by her tears and her passionate entreaties, and consulting with his fellows, the rough soldier admitted her for a last farewell.

Entering the appalling cell where her dear husband lay, she threw aside all signs of tears and weakness, and pleaded and reasoned with him until at length he consented to do as she wished. She then arrayed him in her own outer garments, and swathed his head and face in the veil, throwing the dark cloak over all. Embracing him fervently, she charged him to walk with bowed head and weeping mien

as she had entered, and quietly took his place on the damp ground.

The guards seeing the distressed figure of the weeping wife, as they thought, allowed Timocrates to pass through with no interference, and soon he had escaped out of the city. At the appointed hour, when the executioner and his assistants entered the cell to seize with rough hands their victim, to their amazement it was no Timocrates they found, but the beautiful, shrinking woman who had taken his place. Astounded and perplexed, they dragged her into the presence of Nicocles himself, who thundered at her infuriated questions and threats. Assuming an even more helpless terror than she felt, she again and again burst into tears and sobs as she tried to answer him. At length he seemed moved himself at her fear and misery and, attempting gentleness, said :

"Be not so much alarmed, lady. What is it you fear? Tell me your real motive in braving my power, deceiving my guards, and rescuing my prisoner."

"Sir," she replied, "I had no other motive than to save my beloved husband from a cruel death. I would hazard anything, even life itself, for his sake. When I heard of his capture and his doom I resolved to brave everything to rescue him, and willingly to offer myself in his place. Yet, my lord, I trust you will not exact my poor life in return for his. You can have no law against my devotion, nor any reason to fear that my husband's liberty will be turned against yourself."

The beauty and tender pleading of Arsinoë so influenced Nicocles, unused as he was to show mercy or clemency, that in her presence his indignation and fury died away. He admitted that her love for her husband justified her conduct, and dismissed her uninjured from his presence.

But whilst extending his pardon to her, he savagely refused to overlook the weakness of the guards which had made the success of her plan possible. Against them, one and all, his wrath raged like fire. "Seize me those caitiff

villains!" he cried; "false to their trust, they permitted access to their prisoner; heedless of their duty, they saw him walk out amidst them. They shall suffer instead of him. Away with them, every one!" This angry injunction was carried out by the mercenaries who supplemented the native guards, and the unfortunate soldiers paid with their lives for their tenderness of heart.

Arsinoë, hearing at length tidings of her husband, disguised herself as a merchant and took ship to follow him, reaching his side after many months, and then settling down, far from the sway of Nicocles, to a peaceful and happy retirement.

ASCANIO MORI DA CENO was a native of Mantua and a soldier—a gentleman adventurer—fighting in Hungary for the Emperor Maximilian against the Turks, and also in the service of the Doge of Venice. Like the Elizabethan courtiers of our own country, he seems to have cultivated the art of literature from love of it. His stories were each dedicated to some prince of the noble houses of Gonzaga or Medici in a sonnet or a madrigal. He died in the later years of the sixteenth century.

THE FRUITLESS PARDON

DURING the lifetime of Luigi Gonzaga, Lord of Castel Geoffredo of distinguished memory, there lived two notorious robbers whose daring and ingenuity prevented their capture, although the number and variety of their depredations had incensed all peace-loving and honest citizens against them. They were brothers, natives of Cremona, and had by their manner of life brought dishonour upon a family hitherto widely esteemed. At length they were caught in some theft especially audacious, flung into prison, and condemned to death. Without waiting for any application of the torture the two criminals recognized that their fate was settled and confessed their guilt.

It was to the gratification of nearly all the Cremonese and the inhabitants of the surrounding villages that the tidings were made known of the capture of the troublesome brigands. But there was yet alive of their house an uncle, Messer Pietro, a man of means who, greatly as he detested his kinsmen's manner of life, hated that relatives of his should be hanged. He was a man well advanced in years and generally wont to persist in any course which

he had once cared to adopt. Having resolved to avert this threatened disgrace to the honour of his family, he lined his pockets with ducats and proceeded to the Court of Justice.

In spite of paving his way with gifts through all the lower ranks of the officers of the law, the nearer he approached the supreme seat the less hopeful of a reprieve he became. For the Duke Luigi Gonzaga had a grave detestation of rascals, and was strongly determined to put down theft and violence throughout his dominions. Hence he turned a deaf ear to all Messer Pietro's entreaties, and declared that the sentence to which he had put his hand and seal should certainly be carried out. The more so as it was so richly deserved, and only by some such exhibition of authority and retribution could the evil example of the highwaymen be weakened. In vain the old man gave himself up to tears and groans; the Duke held firm to his purpose.

Messer Pietro, however, was determined to leave no chance untried during the period that was to elapse before the execution, and so persistently waylaid the Duke in his sessions, his amusements, and his audiences that his lordship wearied of the sight of the old bent figure and the pleading eyes. To avoid him and other troublesome petitioners, Duke Luigi summoned his train and rode away to Goito, to his hunting grounds, where also Duke Frederick II was wont to amuse himself.

He joined the royal party and was very graciously received by Frederick, who affected interest in all matters of government no less than in the arts and sciences, in which he was proficient. Just as Duke Luigi Gonzaga was feeling refreshed and had forgotten the cares of his seat of justice there appeared before him the unwelcome figure of Messer Pietro. Once again, with the same humble gestures and in the same pleading tones, he made his petition for the reprieve of his unworthy nephews. Once again, too, he had overcome the hindrances interposed by

courtiers and officials with heavy bribes; and these now stood around awaiting the reception the old man would have. Softened by his gifts and mischievously indifferent to the welfare of the State, some began to whisper that it was a sad pity. Others, going farther, ventured to say that two fine young fellows should not be condemned to death on their first capture. Still others recalled the valour of one or the other when serving in the regiments of the Duke, and protested that such ignominious deaths were not for those who had proved themselves capable soldiers.

These murmurs reached the Duke's ears, and with them the courtiers' praise of his humanity, his recognition of good service, his power of discrimination, and so on, until he began to doubt whether such severity were really the fitting punishment in this case. So that when a privileged courtier approached him and suggested the remission of the punishment for a considerable fine, the Duke, being weary of the whole matter, gave in, and affixing his signature and seal, sent the pardon to the judge of the district. At last Messer Pietro was silenced and satisfied, and would willingly have withdrawn from the court and made his journey at once to Mantua with his nephews' pardon.

But he was seized with an acute fever and could not stir from his bed. So there he was, possessor of the precious document which in two days' time would be but so much waste paper. Added to this he had distributed and spent nearly the last of his ducats. However, the same courtier who had procured the pardon consented, in consideration of a further gift, to send the missive by one of the speediest scouts in attendance at court. Him he hired, and charged him to race to Mantua without delay and give the packet to the judge. As he set forth Messer Pietro resigned himself to suffer with what patience he could, feeling doubtful whether he would live to receive his nephews' thanks for their release or to give them any parting advice.

The messenger belied not his reputation, but sped to Mantua, presented himself at the city gates, insisted that he was in the Duke's service and must enter, and was given a pass to Castel Geoffredo. Making his way across the city to the judge's house, he had to cross the great central square, and there, although it was early morning, there was assembled a large concourse of people. They had come out to witness the execution of two notorious robbers; and much impressed with the fragments of discourse he heard in the square, the messenger paused to witness the carrying out of a just sentence upon these disturbers of the peace. His ducal livery won him the respect of the crowd, and soon he stood near the scaffold and within hearing of the chaplain's voice.

When the dread office was over, which it quickly was, he proceeded to the judge's house and demanded to place his packet within that functionary's keeping without delay, expecting fully to be specially commended for his expedition. On opening the letter and glancing at the contents, the judge uttered an exclamation of surprise, and then questioned the runner as to how and when exactly he had arrived in the city.

"Dolt, blunderhead!" he exclaimed; "when did you set out from Goito?"

"One hour before midnight, please your lordship. At least I had my orders at that time, and set out within an hour afterwards."

"You did, did you?" thundered the judge. "Where else did you stop?"

"Stop, your lordship? I ran every mile of the way. I never stopped at all, please your lordship, except within the city just now to see two robbers executed."

"Ah! idle villain!" said the judge. "Do you know that you have been the death of both of them? What if you should lose your head for this delay?"

"But, my lord," pleaded the runner, much dismayed that instead of having commendation for his speed, he seemed

to be in peril of losing his life; "indeed, I never stopped on the way, and I knew I was here in excellent time. And when I saw that business in the square I knew your lordship could not attend to me for the moment, and when it was over I came on directly, as your lordship sees."

"Sirrah!" said the judge, "it was a matter of life and death, and you dawdled on the way in the public square. I have a mind to make a public example of you!"

"My lord, my lord," cried the wretched man, "I knew nothing of what I was bringing. Had I known I would not have waited one instant."

"Well, there now," replied the judge, "that does somewhat alter the aspect of the case. It may turn out to be Messer Pietro's own fault, after all."

"Please your lordship," hurriedly cried the man, "he is lying very ill, and will most likely be dead before I get back, so he will never know."

And thus it turned out.

Then the judge wrote a careful account of the whole matter to Duke Luigi Gonzaga, regretting that he had not been able to comply with His Excellency's commands, and venturing to add that he believed the sufferers to have been in no way deserving of pardon.

With this the Duke cordially agreed, and was glad not to have to regret his clemency.

GRASSO LEGNAIUOLO: THE CHANGED EBONY-CARVER

(Author Unknown)

ABOUT the year 1409 a company of young Florentines had met together at the house of their friend, Tommaso di Pecori, to sup and enjoy pleasant conversation together. This Tommaso was an extremely merry and good-natured man, and no one could be dull in his society. When supper was over the party drew their chairs round the fire and prepared for an evening's mirthful talk. Soon one of the guests commented upon the absence of an esteemed member, observing, "What can be the reason that we have not the company of Manetto Ammanotini here to-night?" Now this Manetto was a carver in ivory, with a shop in the Piazza San Giovanni, and was considered a very skilful artist. He was of a comfortable and easy-going disposition; indeed, his portly bearing had won for him the name of "Grasso" (Fat), and his reputation for laughing good-nature even exceeded that for artistic power.

Several talkers joined in regretting the absence of Grasso, and presently became so much in earnest that they wished to punish him for thus neglecting the assembly, and "to teach him better manners in future." They cast round for some good trick to play him, for the Florentines were ever lovers of practical jokes, and presently an ingenious suggestion came from a certain Philip Brunellesco. Said he, "I believe we should have no difficulty in persuading him that he has been metamorphosed,

and that would give us something to laugh at for years to come."

"Nay, that is impossible," they all exclaimed.

"I say not," returned Philip. "Listen to my plan, and join in it, and you will see us carry it out successfully."

When Philip Brunellesco had explained his idea all the party joyfully fell in with it, and agreed to convince the amiable Grasso that he was changed into Matteo, a member of the company. The next night was to see the beginning of the plot.

Philip, as being on very familiar terms with Grasso, was to visit him in the evening just as he was closing his shop, and was shortly afterwards to be hastily summoned away. This he did, and after some little talk a lad came running, saying that "Messer Brunellesco must come at once; his mother has had an accident, and is very ill." Assuming an air of alarm and anxiety, Philip hastened away, his friend Grasso expressing sympathy and offering to accompany him. Philip, a little conscience-stricken, thanked him, saying, "Not now; but should I need you I will certainly send for you," and hurried away.

Pretending to hasten homeward, Philip went by roundabout ways back to Grasso's house, he having, in his sociable desire for company, left it, and after wandering about the market-place a little, found some pleasant friends in an inn. Philip, half relenting about his joke, picked the lock of his friend's door, entered the shop, and barred up for the night. When, towards midnight, Grasso returned, to his amazement he could not get in. His mother lived with him, but she had that morning gone out to his little country place at Poleressa and was not to return for a day or two. Puzzling himself as to his too effective locking of the door, Grasso thought that perhaps his mother had returned, and shouted, "Open the door!" At length a voice, just like his own, sleepily answered him,

"Who is there?" and Grasso, much startled, replied, "It is I; let me in!"

The voice said, "Now, Matteo, please go away. I am in great anxiety about a friend of mine; for while I was talking to him in my shop he was suddenly fetched home because his mother had had an accident." Then the voice could be heard grumbling and complaining in exactly Grasso's own rumbling, good-natured tones, as though he were talking to his mother. Much perplexed, Grasso went down the steps and looked up at the familiar windows of his house. Just then, as had been carefully arranged, Donatello the sculptor came by. "Ah! Matteo. Good night! I was going to call on our friend Grasso, but it is too late." This still further bewildered Grasso: to hear himself addressed by an intimate acquaintance as "Matteo," and not recognized just outside his own house, made him wonder if he was dreaming. He walked away into the Piazza San Giovanni, saying to himself, "I will stay here till somebody comes along who knows who I really am!"

Seated on the stone bench in the corner of the wall, he saw three men coming along. As they neared him he recognized a police officer and a bailiff, to whom the third said, as he saw Grasso in the shadow, "That is my man; that is Matteo! I have waited long enough for my debt. Take him!" The officers laid hands upon him, and in vain he protested, "I am Manetto Ammanotini, 'Grasso' the carver. I am not Matteo!" The pretended creditor exclaimed, "What! you not Matteo? As if I did not know my debtor only too well! Off with him! unless, indeed, he can pay me my money here and now!"

At the prison his name was entered in the jail-book as "Matteo," and he was sent into the general room with other detained prisoners, many of whom hailed him with, "Halloa, Matteo! Good night, Matteo!" Poor Grasso began to think that he must have undergone some strange transformation; and when some of the prisoners said,

"Come and have supper with us, and put off thinking of your case till to-morrow!" he gratefully accepted. Supper over, they prepared for rest, one of them saying, "Now, Matteo, make yourself as comfortable as you can, and if, to-morrow, you can pay, well and good. If not, you must send home for some bedclothes." Grasso thanked him and lay down, pensively reflecting upon what would become of him if he had really become Matteo. "This, I fear, must be the case," he meditated; "there seem so many proofs of it!"

After a sleepless night he arose, and stood by a small grated window in the hope that some one passing by might know him. As chance would have it, there approached one Giovanni Rucellai, one of the supper party when the plot was first devised. Grasso was much comforted, for it happened that he had been just employed in carving some decorations for a table ordered by Giovanni, who desired to make a gift to a lady, and only a few days before he had been in Grasso's shop charging him to get on with the work without delay. Giovanni paused to enter a shop opposite the prison grating, and Grasso attracted his attention and nodded and smiled to him. Giovanni looked at him as though he had never seen him before; so that in much distress poor Grasso called out, "Pray, Ser Giovanni. do you happen to know a certain Manetto Ammanotini, otherwise 'Grasso,' who lives behind San Giovanni and does inlaid work?"

"Know him? Know Grasso?" exclaimed Rucellai; "of course I do! as well as I know any one in Florence. He is an esteemed friend of mine." More than ever distressed, the poor prisoner gasped; and Giovanni went on, "I am just on my way to him about a piece of work he has in hand for me."

"Then," said Grasso, "I wish you would kindly tell him that a particular friend of his has been taken into custody, and would be glad to exchange a word with him."

"Why, of course I will," returned Giovanni, and strode away. Grasso, standing gazing out of the window, reflected ruefully, "Why, of course I must be Matteo; everything points to it! And has he become me? I am arrested for him! What can have happened to him instead of me?" The hours passed, and yet no one came, though Grasso had hoped that his message would have brought some one. As the day wore on towards evening other prisoners were brought in, amongst them being a certain judge, arrested for debt. He was unacquainted with Grasso, but struck with his forlorn appearance, and thinking him to be an unhappy debtor, he tried to encourage him with, "Why, Matteo, you look as melancholy as though you were to be executed to-morrow! Come, you must not despair; send for some of your relatives or friends, and try to settle matters. Don't fret yourself to death!"

Hearing himself thus consolingly addressed, Grasso resolved to confide some of his perplexities to his sympathizer. "Do not imagine, my dear sir," said he, "that a mere trivial debt it is which causes me to despair. Alas! it is far worse." And he told the story of his experiences during the last twenty-four hours, asking if his hearer's studies enabled him to speak with certainty as to the possibility of one person being changed into another. His real anxiety and the sincerity of his manner so moved the judge that he decided that the man was either insane or the dupe of some trick. So, desirous to comfort, he replied that he had heard of many persons being thus changed. "Then, tell me," said Grasso, "if I am become Matteo, who is Matteo now?" The judge replied, "He, of course, is Grasso."—"Well," returned the unhappy man, "I should much like to see him, in order to put this matter to rights."

They continued in friendly conversation until about sunset, when two of Matteo's brothers appeared, asking of the prison registrar if a brother of theirs, named Matteo, was

confined there for debt, and for what amount. The registrar replied that there was, and named the amount of the debt. "Well," said the brothers, "we want to see him immediately, and fix upon some method of payment." On being confronted with Grasso, the eldest exclaimed, "Ah, Matteo! and has all the advice we have given you gone for nothing? How often have we warned you of your extravagance! I assure you that were it not for our mother's sake we would leave you here to pay the penalty. As it is, we have determined to give you one more trial and pay the amount, but if you ever repeat the offence we will trouble ourselves no more."

Feeling it useless to protest, Grasso replied with much humility, promising faithfully to abandon all his old extravagances and never again to bring disgrace upon his friends. They then withdrew to make the necessary arrangements, and Grasso, returning to his consoler, the judge, said, "Well, this is strange indeed! Matteo's two brothers have just been, and they promise to get me released this evening. But," he continued, very much puzzled, "when they get me out, where will they take me?"

The judge replied, "Perhaps they will take you home."

"But," said Grasso, "since I am become Matteo, *he* must have become Grasso surely, and is happily at home with my mother!"

"Then I should advise you to accompany your brothers wherever they go," said his friend.

Towards evening the two brothers appeared, still keeping up the joke and pretending that they had arranged Matteo's debts. The jailer, appearing in the large courtyard, said, "Which of you is Matteo?"

Poor Grasso stepped forward, saying, "I am he"; and the jailer went on, "Your brothers have settled your debt, you are free," at the same time opening the prison door. Grasso and the brothers passed out, and made their way across the city to Santa Felicita. Arrived at home, they

took Grasso into a room where was a good fire and a meal spread, and charged him to stay there quietly till supper time.

Determining to lengthen out the joke still further, the brothers then visited a priest, explaining that they came in confidence to ask his help with their poor brother. "We are three brothers," they said, "and yesterday one of us, Matteo, was arrested for debt. This so greatly worried him that it affected his mind, and he is possessed of a delusion. He is convinced that he has become a certain Grasso, a carver in ebony, who has a shop at Santa Reparata, and there seems no way of getting it out of his head. We have brought him from prison and are guarding him at home, lest he should publish his folly. We are come to beg you to visit him and to try to reason him out of his absurd idea."

The priest kindly consented to accompany them home, and greeted the wretched Grasso with, "Good evening, Matteo; I trust you are well."

"Good evening," replied Grasso; "for whom are you looking?"

The priest answered, "I am come to sit with you a little while," and, seating himself, he continued: "Come, sit down by me, Matteo. I was much grieved to hear of your arrest, and especially that you have taken it so to heart. They tell me you have got it into your head that you are no longer Matteo, but a certain fellow named Grasso the carver, who keeps a shop at Santa Reparata. Now I do entreat you to dismiss such whims entirely, and attend to your business like other people. Otherwise people will think you have lost your senses and give you no credit for any attempt you may make to avoid debts in future."

Grasso, touched by the kindly way in which he spoke, declared that he should be glad to follow his counsels, and so from that hour he would dismiss from his mind any idea of being other than Matteo. "But," he concluded, "I

should like an interview with the real Grasso if I am not he."—"What!" said the priest; "then you still believe that? Were you to insist upon speaking to Grasso it would merely indulge your folly and proclaim it to all the world."

So the poor man gave way, and the priest took his leave.

Meanwhile Philip Brunellesco had visited the brothers, and presented them with a draught, saying, "Take care to give him this to drink to-night at supper. It will throw him into a profound slumber, so that nothing could awake him for six hours at least. I will return presently, and we will finish the joke."

So the brothers sat down with the poor victim to supper, and managed to mix the draught with his wine, so that he drank it all. After the feast Grasso, sitting by the fire, began to feel so sleepy that he could hardly keep his eyes open. The brothers, rather amused, said, "Why, Matteo, you are very dull! You are almost asleep."

"True," replied Grasso, "I am; I never was so sleepy in my life, and, indeed, it is no wonder, for last night I hardly closed my eyes. Pray let me go to bed." No sooner had he lain down than he fell into a profound slumber and snored heavily.

Presently Philip and three of his companions appeared, and between them they lifted Grasso, laid him upon a litter, and carried him to his own house. There they placed him gently on his bed, and arranged everything in its wonted order, leaving him sleeping heavily alone in the house, for his mother had not yet returned. They then went into his workshop, and moved all his instruments and tools, and put them in different places and positions. Saws, hammers, planes, rules, hatchets, were all confusedly laid about and everything disturbed, and in this state they locked up the shop. Grasso slept the whole night, and awoke late the next morning. Rushing to the window, he tried to collect his scattered thoughts. He felt the

greatest astonishment at finding himself again in his own house.

With satisfaction he hastened to take down the key from its accustomed place, and entered his workshop. "Mercy on us!" he exclaimed. "What a sight is here!" And he began distractedly to arrange his things in something like order. At this moment there entered one of Matteo's brothers, pretending not to know Grasso, and saying, "Good day, master." Poor Grasso, who knew him for his companion of supper-time, grew very red and said, "Good day; pray whom are you seeking?"

"I will tell you," was the reply, "we have a brother named Matteo, and lately he has had an odd delusion that he is no longer Matteo, but the master of this shop, a man named Grasso. We have done everything we could, and have asked the advice of a priest. He induced him to give up his foolish notion, and last night he fell into a great slumber after becoming quite reasonable. But this morning he has gone off, and we can get no tidings of him."

Grasso seemed much bothered at this account, and said, "Why disturb me with your affairs? I know nothing of all this. Matteo has not been here; if he said he was I, he was guilty of falsehood, and if I meet with him I shall tell him so." Then, seizing his cloak, he left them in great anger, and afterwards, locking up his shop, went towards Santa Reparata complaining bitterly the whole way. By chance he met a youth whom he knew, who was a mosaic worker under Maestro Pellegrino of Terma. He had for some time been settled in Hungary, where he had prospered exceedingly, and was now returned to Florence to carry out numerous important errands. He had often tried to persuade Grasso to return with him, and this Grasso remembered. Hastening towards him, he exclaimed, "You have more than once asked me to go with you to Hungary, but now I shall be glad to come. Only I must start at once." His friend fell in with his eagerness,

and Grasso started almost that moment for Bologna, leaving a letter for his mother, asking her to take charge of his property until his return. His affairs prospered exceedingly, and in later years, on his occasional visits to Florence, he delighted to describe to his friends the mysterious adventures which had led to his leaving the city.

THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS

(Capacelli)

IN the beautiful Italian city of Verona there lived the young cavalier Roderigo, of noble birth, high fortune, and with many friends. He was not a pleasure-loving youth, and indeed showed some love for worthy things and dignified pursuits. But he was subject to fits of dissatisfaction and depression, in which the time slipped away purposelessly, and he cared not at all for either study or recreation. Aware of the foolishness of giving way to these moods, he used to try to reason sternly with himself. "Why am I so weary, so uninterested in everything alike? I see others eager, active, full of energy and enjoyment, while I am merely bored and empty. I could cry in the theatre; the conversazione annoys me; the dance and the hunt both are without pleasure. Since the company of others and the intercourse of work and amusement are no satisfaction to me, I will go right away and live in solitude."

So on a fine morning in May behold him giving the last orders to his attendants in his home in Verona, and setting off for his country house amongst the hills. At first this change seemed to have lifted off the weight of gloom from his mind, and in his relief he decided to adopt a method of life which should fill all his time and leave no opportunity for idle melancholy and vain regrets. Certain hours, therefore, he set aside rigorously for study, for regular religious exercises, for hunting, and for quiet enjoyment of the country. So interesting he found his experiment, that at first he dreaded being interrupted by visitors; but none cared to disturb his quietness, and he was able to carry out his scheme of life completely.

In a few weeks' time he was conscious of something of the old discontented feeling, and day by day it became more marked until, just as before, he had no pleasure in anything that he did. One day when he had been quite unable to make any progress in his work, and could not endure the idea of going to the hunt in the afternoon, he flung himself on his knees and cried, "O merciful heavens! show me wherein true happiness consists!" Presently it seemed to him that he heard a low whisper, "Go forth and seek, and you shall find it." Much cheered, and with the burden of discontent lifted from his mind, he went out, walking slowly and watching the pleasant green verdure of spring on trees and shrubs. Becoming more cheerful as he walked he soon felt his heart glad within him, and admired and loved all the growing things he saw. The afternoon passed away and the stillness of evening came on as the sun sank to rest, but still he walked on wrapt in pleasing thought.

The whisper he had heard as he knelt carried such certainty into his mind that he had no thought of turning back until he had found what he sought. So that when darkness succeeded twilight he was still pursuing the rough road amongst the rocks. Suddenly from amongst some huge scattered boulders which loomed up on one side of him he heard distressing cries. They were so full of pain and misery that they struck terror into his heart, but he at once turned towards the rocks to find what caused the lamentable wails. In the dim light he presently beheld, cowering under a huge sloping stone, some human figures, and drawing near saw a man stretched upon some bracken, with only a few rags to cover him, and beside him, equally ill-clad, four little boys, crying and wringing their hands as if their hearts would break. Sometimes they would fling themselves upon the man and kiss him, and then cry more hopelessly than before.

The noise made by Roderigo in approaching caused them to look up, but neither the man nor the children

showed any signs of alarm or even of interest. The man was in such evil case that he might well feel that he had nothing else to fear, and the boys were too much absorbed in their misery to heed the stranger. Roderigo hastened to the sufferer's side, asking what he could do, and promising to return quickly with help.

"There is no help for me," said the poor man. "Famine has done its work. But I beg you to save and protect these lads. That one," he gasped, pointing feebly to the youngest of them, "is the image of his dear mother, and I have had courage to endure, thus far, because his face recalled hers to me continually. I could die happy if I could feel that they would be preserved from my wretched fate."

Roderigo's heart was full of pity, and he thought to himself, "Though my eyes are full of tears at the sight of so much misery, yet my heart is easier than it ever was in the gay scenes of old." Then to the dying man he said, "Take courage, my friend, you need not die. And, dear children, dry your tears: bear up a little longer, and I will return." Then Roderigo hastened back to his villa, to find his servants anxious at his long delay and just about to go in search of him. He interrupted their glad welcome to charge them to prepare his carriage and quantities of food and clothing, and even helped them himself to get the provisions selected and packed. Two large chests of garments, food, wine, and medicine were borne by several porters, who followed Roderigo in his carriage to the spot where he had left the wretched sufferer and the lads. With him in the vehicle he took a favourite attendant.

When Roderigo mentioned the place whither they were bound this man observed, "I know the place perfectly well. There is a family of poor people living among the rocks. I have occasionally given my mite to help them."—"You have?" exclaimed his master. "You have assisted them? and I did nothing! Benedict, you make me ashamed for my name and my wealth. You have been before me in

doing good, but you shall help me in future to make up for my past negligence. We will go together. We will make many a drooping heart sing for joy! Life is yet worth something. I feel as if I might yet be happy!"

On reaching the spot Benedict at once assisted his master to clothe the shivering lads and to give some comfort to the dying man. Then they began to distribute the food, and were much touched to see that the four boys, when presented with some, at once offered it to their father and tried to induce him to taste it. When at last they had eaten a good meal and were much strengthened and refreshed, they were loud in their thanks to Roderigo for his bounty. This so moved him that he was conscious of feeling a happiness he had never before known.

He then gave instructions that they should be moved to a comfortable shelter near his villa, and that the invalid should have all necessary care and attention. In examining into the sufferer's affairs, he found that he had been the victim of misfortune and had not deserved his unhappy fate. A lawsuit, brought out of malice, first reduced him to poverty; and his health breaking down under the strain, he was unable to earn anything wherewith to keep a home for his children. His benefactor determined to get his wrongs redressed if possible, and enabled him to have a new trial, in which his persecutor was exposed and his own good name restored. The pains and trouble taken by Roderigo in the matter gave him such new and complete satisfaction that he resolved to give himself up to doing good and seeking out cases of misfortune that he might relieve them. So he spent the years of a long and happy life.

THE DOCTOR AND THE ASS

(Carlo Lodoli)

A CERTAIN Sammarinista, professor of law and a doctor, who belonged to the ancient family of Malvasia, was one day leisurely journeying from the city to try a cause in a provincial court. As he drew near to the river, which he hoped to cross by the ford at low water, he came up with two persons who seemed to be having a heated argument.

Upon inquiring into the matter he found that one of them, Tizio, had carried the other, Sempronio, over the water on his shoulders; the condition being that on their return the bearer was to be carried back. They had now reached the river on their way home, and Sempronio refused to carry out his share of the bargain. The doctor, hearing the cause of strife thus explained, delivered his opinion that "he who had borne his friend should now by his friend be carried"; and added thereto some persuasion and much argument based upon the apparent robustness of the shirker. In spite, however, of all his eloquence Sempronio remained obstinate, and would not listen to either reasoning or appeals.

Then Sammarinista resolved to try the force of a few hard words. Raising his hand and adopting a position of command, he cried in a voice of thunder, "O! perjured villain, wilt thou wait till the great Hugo Grotius pulls off thy shoes; till the Lord Baron Puffendorff sets thy friend on thy shoulders; and the Duke of Cumberland pushes thee into the water?" At those appalling names the rascal was no longer proof against the doctor's appeal, but, mounting Tizio upon his shoulders, took to the river, and made his way across it as fast as he could.

The lawyer then pursued his journey with some complacency. What one method could not accomplish, another could: so he rode on, feeling able to cope with any difficulty. Some days later, his cause being determined, he was taking his way back, and on reaching the ford found that his ass showed some reluctance to take to the water. Indeed, more than this, he audibly remonstrated, being apparently descended from the historical animals of old who could speak as well as bear burdens.

"What is the matter?" said the doctor. "Dost thou wish to drink?"

"I want no drink," replied the beast.

"Then," said the doctor, resolved upon being reasonable and maintaining his composure, "get thee along!"

"But," remonstrated the ass, "how can you expect such a thing? Only just a day or two ago, here on this spot, you decided that he who carried the other over ought to be carried back. Do you think I did not hear you? or that I have no word to say on the subject? So dismount, good master, I will carry you no further, and for once you shall take your turn and carry me."

Much surprised and annoyed at the turn of affairs, the doctor proceeded to chastise the ass: but no amount of beating made any impression on his firm resolve not to bear his master across the ford. Meanwhile the tide was rising, and the lawyer saw with some anxiety that soon there would be a considerable flood to cross. Added to this the arguments of the ass, delivered between the blows he received, were weighty and unanswerable. The nonplussed master pointed out the impropriety of the conduct and the difference between the ass and himself. But to this came the retort that in his ancestry the ass had probably as many illustrious doctors and lawyers as his master.

With the evening approaching Sammarinista felt that perhaps he had better yield and endeavour to carry his beast across. So looking round to see that no one was

observing them he alighted and began to take off his outer clothing. Stepping with a shudder into the water, he cried, "Come, thou monstrous and wilful beast; give me thy fore feet up here, and be sure thou dost not lay more weight on me than thou canst help!"

"Trust me for that," said the ass; and reared himself up with his fore feet on his master's shoulders. However, he could not adjust his hinder legs, and the two slipped about helplessly. Then the doctor tried to carry him crossways, but could not manage it; so he bound his legs fast together and threw him across his shoulders. This was worst of all! Finally blundering one way and another they got into the stream, but then the doctor fell down, and both would have been drowned but for the lucky arrival of some more travellers.

They helped both man and beast out of the stream, and the doctor was much perplexed to know how to explain his reason for seeking to cross a ford with an ass whose legs were tied! Fortunately the beast himself had now ceased to comment, and at length the newcomers got them all safely across the river.

Ever after the doctor showed himself in full accord with the proverbs and maxims which warn people of the danger of letting servants get the upper hand; and remembering how once it was turned against himself, he became less eager to advise and less determined to have his advice followed.

ALIMEK AND HIS ADVENTURES

(Francesco Soave)

AN Arabian shepherd named Alimek was one day idly watching his flocks in the pastures on the lower slopes of the mountain, when he chanced to see a deep grotto almost hidden by bushes and creepers. He stooped his head and entered, and becoming used by degrees to the dim light, he went on into its recesses. Presently he espied, lying close together, a purse, a ring, and a sheet of old parchment. He at once seized the purse, but, to his disappointment, it was empty. "Now a plague upon thee!" he exclaimed. "I thought thou hadst been somewhat better than emptiness! Not a single piece, I vow!" and he flung it away.

As it fell there was a sound as of the chink of coins, and Alimek hastily stooped to pick it up. To his astonishment it was full of gold pieces. "Heavens!" he cried, "what is this? By our Prophet there is some enchantment here; I will take care to turn it to good account." Hastily picking up the purse, the ring, and the parchment, he went as quickly as possible out of the grotto. "Farewell, O ye ancient woods," he cried; "no more shall I sport in your pleasant shades. Now that I am a favourite of Fortune I must seek the busy city, the splendour and delight of Mecca."

The next moment he found himself there, standing in the crowded street. Taking the parchment out of his robe, he unfolded it and read, "The purse will fill again with gold as often as you please; the ring will instantly transport you wheresoever you will." Delighted at these tidings, Alimek first expressed his wish to visit different countries,

and as each wish was immediately granted, and the journey most speedily accomplished, he soon saw many lands and peoples. At first he was greatly interested in contrasting the manners and customs and climates and productions of widely separated countries, but presently he grew tired of this. On looking more closely he found that the differences were usually merely on the surface, and that there was a great and indestructible sameness even in the most diverse lands and peoples.

Hence he decided to take a more active part than that of merely observing; and for this purpose he settled down at Constantinople, the most gorgeous city of the East. Here he found that his great wealth procured him every kind of service and luxury, and that his caprices were studied and gratified by numbers of willing people. But after excelling all other rich men by the extreme magnificence of his life and surroundings, they soon ceased to have any charm for him, and he found himself weary and ill at ease. Then he succumbed to a violent fever; and only when it left him and he slowly regained his strength did he feel any zest in life. He determined to exercise and gratify his new energy by a life of incessant activity; and began to enter into all the public proceedings of the time. His wealth and fearlessness, his resolution and capacity, won for him such consideration that before long he was invited to hold some of the highest offices in the State. Bringing his whole mind to bear upon the tasks he undertook, he accomplished many successful designs, and at length became Grand Vizier.

In this position of almost unbounded power he found much that was novel and exciting, but the incessant demands made upon him by persons with petitions, or grievances, or offerings, or proposals from other rulers, left him hardly a moment's leisure in which to realize what he was achieving. The continual round of receptions, audiences, visits, and stately progresses kept him so perpetually engaged that he presently felt it to be only a

gorgeous kind of slavery; and he meditated how to resign his high office and escape to a quiet life. Before, however, he could obtain permission for this, there came tidings of an attempted invasion by Persia, and he had at once to increase the Sultan's army and order a campaign to subdue the presumptuous foe.

In the beginning of the war two glorious victories were won by the Turks, and their enemies were driven back beyond Turkestan. Then the whole empire rang with praise of Alimek; he was sought and honoured by the great, revered by the poor, and the Sultan himself proclaimed that he desired to receive him in the capital with a most sumptuous display. But, unfortunately, bent upon thoroughly punishing the retreating Persian army, Alimek advanced with but a small bodyguard well into the hostile territories and fell into an ambush.

Only with great difficulty was he rescued, and it cost a large proportion of his army to win back their leader. From that moment, either through his indiscretion or from the fickleness of the popular imagination, the magic of his name was gone. Voices questioned and criticized now when his deeds were mentioned, and slowly but surely there gathered a storm of disapproval which presently threatened to burst and overwhelm him. News was brought to him that he was to be tried for treason and that sentence of death would certainly be passed. So once again he availed himself of the mysterious virtue of the ring, and disappeared in safety from the capital. After travelling in many climes he settled down in Golconda.

Here there reigned a beautiful princess named Selima who was considered the wonder of Asia. Alimek much desired an introduction to her, and when it was brought about he fell in love with her. She too was most pleasantly struck with Alimek's fine wit, agreeable manners, and wide knowledge of men and things; and graciously requested his constant presence at her court,

in the chase, in tournaments, and at banquets. At each function his magnificence, ease, daring, and polish won him the admiration of all.

Soon Alimek believed that the beautiful Selima would bestow her hand upon him, could they but arrange to make the union pleasing to her subjects. But some of the courtiers, ever on the watch for grievances, resented the privileges and favour showered upon a stranger and plotted to ruin him. They made up various dishonourable stories about him, and caused rumours of all kinds of evil and treacherous actions, which Alimek was supposed to have committed, to reach the ears of the princess. So artfully were these slanders constructed that she believed them, and not only withdrew her favour, but even resolved to order his execution. So once again Alimek had recourse to the magic ring to save him from a position of serious danger.

With an angry heart he left the glowing city of Golconda, feeling that unhappiness followed him wherever he went. Moodily he went from one state to another; always spared the trouble of travel, yet always losing its charm and interest. Presently he found himself in China, surveying barren tracts of land and dismal stretches of wood. He was alone and on foot, and suddenly he heard sounds of music and laughter. Following the sounds he came within sight of a little hamlet, where a group of villagers were enjoying sports and games, and young and old alike seemed full of mirth and light-heartedness. One aged man in particular Alimek noticed, whose face shone with kindly happiness; he was bowed with years and poorly clad, yet full of life and spirit. Advancing towards him, Alimek saw how sympathetically he entered into the enjoyment he witnessed, and, much impressed, said to him that he was amazed and glad to see such universal enjoyment.

The old man replied, "This is by no means an unusual sight with us. This day is one of our holidays, and con-

secrated to the worship of the gods. Thus, in passing the hours in innocent pastime and repose, we set it apart from ordinary days, and gain refreshment and vigour for ourselves."

"True," said Alimek; "and it must be delightful to escape for even a day from your hard lot of toil and scanty fare."

The old man smiled as he said, "I have passed my sixtieth year in the kind of life you describe so bitterly, and I have only to thank the gods for having spent it so pleasantly. I was never unhappy; and though I understand that you great ones of the earth think that gold and silver and diamonds and other precious gems must be sorely lacked, I assure you that they are quite unnecessary and that we villagers never think about them. And when we hear of the sights of your cities, the crimes and violence, the tumult and restlessness, we are more inclined to pity than to envy those who live there. We have all that we need, and nothing more can add to our happiness."

Alimek was much surprised at this unusual view expressed by the old villager, and resolved to come and live somewhere near him for a time, to see if he could forget his own sorrows and disappointments in beholding the simple pleasures of these poor villagers. He went on: "It seems to me very strange that you should be so happy, considering how hard you have to work."—"Labour," said the old man, "may appear hard, and even a punishment to idle people, but to us, who are used to it, it is a pleasure. Indeed, I never remember to have spent such weary and irksome hours as those when, through some indisposition, I was unable to work. Moments seemed hours; hours were years. But once I could work again, evening was upon me before I was aware; I had no tedium, no anxiety. I see both, however, on the faces of the townsmen in your great cities whenever I visit those crowded streets."

"Yet," said Alimek, "the perpetual recurrence of fatigue which you endure must be more intolerable than that of

tedium?"—"As to fatigue," replied the old man, "a slave may be forced to work beyond his powers, and thus be compelled to endure agonies of tiredness; but free men, like ourselves, work with vigour and interest, and take refreshment and repose as we need them. They are enjoyed far more by us than by those who never labour, and we go back to work prepared and fit to enjoy it. You have but little idea how good is the food and how sweet the repose that follow the vigorous exercise of our bodily powers. And then there is much pleasure to be got from seeing work prosper, when it is done with our own hands. Every furrow in my field is another promise of joyous harvest."

"But surely," said Alimek, "the fruit of your exertions is but a little matter compared with all that the rich are able to enjoy without either anxiety or trouble."

"However little," replied the old man, "it matters not so long as it is enough. When I drink at this clear stream and quench my thirst, why should it concern me that another may have it in his power to quaff up the whole of the great river?"

Alimek agreed, but seemed still unable to understand the deep contentment of the speaker, and murmured something about the rarity of happiness under such conditions.

The old man went on: "I have seen that those who are called the wealthy and the fortunate are so tormented by their own caprices that they cannot gratify their thousand absurd wishes and wants. You will agree with me that only three things are requisite for happiness—tranquillity, occupation, and content."

Astonished at finding so much true philosophy and good sense in an old villager, Alimek was conscious of having himself pursued a vain and wearisome search for happiness. "So the felicity I have been pursuing," he reflected, "was from the first within my grasp! What real use has the secret I found in the grotto been to me? Better for me to have lived on in my native fields in simplicity!"

Throughout the night he slept little, his mind continually turning over his own fruitless ambition and restlessness, and the quiet courage of the old man. In the morning he greeted him with, "Instead of saying farewell, I would like to live with you, and thus gain a share of your independence and happiness."

The old villager smiled on him and said, "I am glad that you are attracted by our simple life, though I fear that after all your experiences you will hardly find happiness in it. For happiness is not to be found just by coming to live in the quiet retreats of the country. Without content of mind it will be sought for in vain there, as elsewhere."

"But, my friend," said Alimek, "a country life is by no means so new to me as you imagine. I dare say I should resume it with much pleasure." And here he told the old cottager of his early life, his miraculous discovery in the grotto, and all his later adventures. Then he gave him the magic purse and the ring, of which he had become heartily weary, and begged him to give him in exchange a refuge from the storms and vanities of the world.

"Gladly I will accept these gifts," said the old man, "but I shall take care not to avail myself of their powers. I will keep them for you, lest you should regret having parted with them."

"I think that will never be," said Alimek. "I have tasted the folly of riches, ambition, and glory." So he settled down in the family of the humble villager, and not only accommodated himself to his new circumstances, but found himself growing happier and more contented every day. When he had lived thus for a year and a day he felt himself able to decide that he would be well content to stay for the rest of his life. So, by agreement with his friend and host, he buried the purse and the ring deep in the soil of the hillside.

THE PERSIAN PEASANT

(Author Unknown)

ONE morning a Persian peasant was taking a kid to market, himself riding upon an ass, and the handsome little creature following him. In order that it might not stray unheeded he had tied a little bell round its neck. After journeying for some distance he fell in with three robbers, famous, or rather infamous, for the daring and cunning of their thefts. Seeing the rustic approaching, one of the three said to his companions, "Lo! here comes a fine fish for our net. I think he is worth working. I bet you what you please I can run away with that pretty kid without the stupid fellow perceiving it!"

Then said another, "And I will undertake to get the ass he rides upon, with his own permission, and even his thanks."

"Pooh!" said the third, "don't boast of those exploits. They are mere child's tricks. I will strip him of the very clothes on his back and he shall salute me as benefactor and friend."

"Let us away, then," said they.

Then the first one followed the countryman at a little distance, and with great dexterity untied the bell from the kid's neck and secured it to the ass's tail. He then led the kid off in the opposite direction, while the peasant, hearing still the jingle of the bell, contentedly jogged on his way.

Presently he turned round, and, hearing the bell but not seeing the goat, he was greatly puzzled what to think or which way to look. He ran distractedly in all directions, wildly asking those he met if they had seen his kid or the thief who had stolen it. The second robber was amongst

those he asked, and he replied, "I saw a man running away in that direction just now. He had a goat with him, and no doubt it is yours." The peasant thanked him for his information, and, leaving his ass in his charge, hastily ran in the direction he had been shown. He ran till he was out of breath, but saw nothing of either thief or kid, and at length returned dejectedly to where he had left his kind informant.

But neither stranger nor ass was to be seen. "Alas!" he cried, "where is my friend? Where is my donkey? Surely, surely, the thief has not stolen them!" When he realized what had happened he broke into angry lamentations. Then he cried, "The next rascal who imposes on me must be made of very different stuff." Suddenly he heard a deep groan, and a little farther on found a man weeping bitterly. Our countryman greeted him with, "What is the matter with you that you make such a lamentable noise? Do you think you are as unlucky as I am? I have lost two beautiful beasts at one moment. I was going to market with my kid, when lo! two wretched thieves robbed me of all I had in the world!"

The weeping man was the third robber, and he replied, "Begone! And do not seek to compare miseries with me. Why, I have dropped a case of precious jewels, which I was taking to the Cadi, into this well. The value of them would not only buy all the asses and goats there are, but Persia into the bargain; and if I fail to find them the Cadi will certainly hang me." And again he raised his voice in doleful weeping, when the countryman remonstrated, "Then why not strip and dive for them? It would be better than raising all this clamour. The well is not deep enough to break your neck, nor the water deep enough to drown you."

"Alas!" replied the robber, "I can neither dive nor swim; I should certainly perish. If any one would take compassion on me and go down, I would give him ten pieces of gold to find them."

"Would you indeed?" exclaimed the rustic, reflecting to himself, "Here is a way to redeem my losses! It will pay me double, both for the goat and the ass"; and he at once began to take off his clothes to prepare to dive. Then, balancing himself on the edge of the well, he leapt in, plunging and diving in all directions. But in vain; no treasure could he find.

At length, having thoroughly searched, and feeling cold and cramped, he clambered out again and hastened towards his heap of clothes. But neither friend nor garments were there! Miserably he had to wait, shivering, until some passer-by took pity on him and helped him with clothes and food to take his way home.

Arrived there, he found his wife in great anxiety about him, and when he broke to her the tale of his misfortunes, she upbraided him piteously, and they mingled their tears together. Some long time afterwards the Cadi's officers succeeded in capturing the three audacious and mean-spirited robbers, and, in company with all right-minded people, the poor peasant and his wife rejoiced greatly.

THE VIRTUE OF MODESTY

(Girolamo Padovani)

THE Baron of Carolich had three sons, whom he trained and educated so that they might grace the high positions to which they belonged. But Borso, the second son, was a lad of coarse fibre and rough, overbearing disposition. Besides being fiercely selfish in his pleasures, he was extremely awkward and incapable, apparently, of acquiring any of the social accomplishments which distinguish the gentleman. It was recorded of him that at the age of fifteen years he was still a backward child intellectually, and obstinate beyond belief. Often would his father lament his unpromising character: "What shall I do with this wretched youth? If I keep him at home he will ruin the peace of my family; yet whither can I send him?"

One day, out of patience, he sent for the lad and exclaimed, "Borso, my son, you are become a very grief and burden to me; you apply yourself to no pursuit! How can you hope to succeed? What sort of figure will you make when you grow up, ignorant as you are?"

"I know what I will be," the boy sullenly replied. "I am quite decided; I will be a soldier."

"What! sir," cried his father; "you are *decided!* and you *will* be a soldier? Why, that is the language of a clown, not of a gentleman's son. Not that it is of any use for me to expect manners of you. Anyhow, if you must be a soldier, go at once and learn the trade; my house cannot hold so undutiful a son much longer."

"I have said it once for all," was the insolent reply. "I am going to be a soldier."

"And I am very well content that you should," returned his father.

Indeed, the Baron was much comforted to learn his son's determination, for he believed that the rough and overbearing ways which were such a disfigurement to a gentleman at home might not be out of place in an adventurous soldier. Soon his fatherly indulgence allowed him to think that Borso would prove a brilliant warrior, and probably end his days as a field-marshal.

A short time after this there came on a visit to the castle of Carolich the young Cavalier del l'Aquila. He had been educated at a military school, and held a high commission in the imperial army of Germany. He was about twenty-two years of age, handsome, accomplished, and singularly modest in speech and bearing. In this he was a pleasing contrast to some of the military officers who were in attendance at the royal seats. He had many interests, and could talk intelligently on subjects besides those connected with his profession. His presence at Modena was a wholesome influence in raising the ideas of the sons of the noble houses, who were rather apt to assume that an air of bluster suited their position better than one of modest self-control.

The Baron was delighted with him, and already anticipated his unpromising Borso becoming equally attractive and distinguished. As for that young man himself, he pronounced del l'Aquila a milksop, no sportsman, and a prig, but he had not yet told him this to his face. When there joined the party an old Italian officer, who had fought in many campaigns and distinguished himself by his coolness and courage, the Baron consulted him as to the best way of starting Borso on his career. He asked the veteran if he would take charge of the young fellow on leaving for Germany, and the officer declared himself willing to do this service to an esteemed friend. The Baron explained, "He is a boy who has given me considerable trouble, but I think he will do me credit at last.

He has decided that he will be a soldier; do not you think that a good sign?"

The officer congratulated the Baron on his son's spirit, and asked that he might have some talk with the youth before pronouncing any opinion on his fitness. Presently an opportunity arose, and Borso, confident that he was making a good impression, was at his noisiest and most boasting pitch. His questioner soon assured himself that, whatever else he might be fit for, he would only be a discredit as a soldier, and wore a rather rueful face as the old Baron approached, expecting a glowing report.

"Well, what think you of our young warrior? Won't he cut a figure in the field?"

"I have seen him," was the reply; "but I think he hardly realizes the difficulties of the profession."

"Perhaps that is so much the better," said the Baron; "he will experience them vividly enough."

"True; but I fear that when that time comes he will not persist in his resolution."

"How so?" exclaimed the Baron. "How can he fail when it is the one thing he wishes for?"

"Indeed I fear he will," was the answer.

"My dear Brigadier," said the distressed father, "do not say so."

"Let me explain," said the officer. "It is not so much that I fear for your son's ignorance and unwillingness to study. That might be overcome if he had real talent for military work."

"Well, then," urged the Baron, "he will be like so many others—when he is obliged to learn, he will."

"It is not only that, my dear Baron. The most serious thing is that the blustering and insolent air with which he thinks he shows his military instincts is exactly the worst fault a soldier can have. Honour and reputation may be won on the field of battle, but there must be a foundation of delicacy and modesty. If we had many characters like your Borso in our mess-rooms

there would be nothing but offence and quarrels, insults and revenges."

"But recollect, Brigadier," pleaded the Baron, "he is still young; is there not yet time?"

"No, my dear Baron," said the veteran. "I fear not. You may take it as a truth that he who is not educated when he ought will never be educated. I dare say you found it impossible with him."

"True," confirmed the Baron; "I did."

Reluctantly giving up his hope of seeing his son enter the military profession under the auspices of his honoured friend, the Baron deferred from day to day any clear understanding with Borso as to what steps should be taken. Meanwhile that headstrong youth was becoming less and less tolerable, and practised an insolent bearing to every one, so that he was universally detested. Ladies shunned him, dreading his coarse laughter and the destructive spurs on his awkward heels; lads of his own age were uneasy in his company; older men could not endure his presence; children fled from his stupid jests, and servants trembled before his unreasonableness and violence.

At length he obtained a commission in a German regiment, and set out for Vienna. The Baron felt nothing but relief at his departure, and though he no longer dreamed pleasant dreams of a distinguished future for Borso, he hoped that at least he would satisfy the regulations. But after the first awkward restraint had worn off, Borso in the mess-room was just the old Borso of his father's castle—rough, overbearing, churlish. Soon he had three challenges, from men determined to run risks for the purpose of giving him a severe lesson. The first duel never came off, as some one informed the police of the intended time and place, and they awaited the arrival of the disputants. His heart failing him as the date of the second meeting approached, Borso sent a secret message to the police himself, and again inter-

ference prevented the contest. When the third duel was to have taken place Borso—ran away.

Henceforth none of his fellow-officers would associate with him or recognize him, and he was obliged to ask permission to resign and return to Modena. There he gave out various fictitious reasons for his return, and announced himself the hero of a hundred daring exploits. But in a few months' time letters came from Vienna with particulars which dimmed his glory in people's eyes, and in vain he posed as the military authority in future. Becoming more reckless and extravagant, he incurred such heavy debts that his father refused to pay them. Then the need for some action made itself felt, and he tried to enter the royal guards of one of the small Italian principalities. He hoped and believed that his Vienna disgraces were unknown here, and hastened to the court to be presented to the prince.

But His Highness had caused inquiries to be made, and was in no haste to enrol the Baron's son amongst his guards. At the interview to which he was presently admitted he assumed what he believed to be a suitably warlike and ferocious air, and was confident of carrying all before him. His conceit and bombast won smiles from the prince, which he interpreted as approval. At length he felt on sufficiently easy terms to ask immediate enrolment in the royal bodyguard; upon which His Highness asked him if he knew how to perform the various exercises.

"Oh, pray excuse me——" Borso exclaimed.

But the prince replied, "But I should like to see you; take your sword and I will review you."

After a variety of manœuvres the prince gave the word of command, "Quick march!" Away Borso marched, and reaching the door expected the order, "Right turn!" but this never came, and he was obliged to march on.

When he was in the gallery beyond, the chamberlain, at a signal from the prince, closed the doors. Borso traversed

the gallery, the great hall, and the vestibule, amidst a crowd of nobles and courtiers, all anxious to see the prince's hero. When he reached the great staircase and still no order to turn had reached him, he had the sense to sheathe his sword and to diminish his consequential pacing, and thus passed through the courtyard.

Assuring himself that the silence had been due to an oversight, the boaster took his way back to Modena, and delighted all who would listen to him with the recital of how the prince had lost a gallant soldier.

THE STORY OF ROBERTO LANDOLFI

(R. Gironi)

THE Lady Constanza, widow of Count Landolfi, of the city of Turin, was left when quite young to bring up her two little sons. Their father had been a nobleman of high character and attainments, and his beautiful wife was in every way worthy of him. Almost heart-broken at his loss, the Lady Constanza sought consolation in devoting herself entirely to bringing up her boys so that they might be worthy of their name and descent. While they were in the nursery she gave them the best of service and care, and took much pains to provide attendants whose influence with the little fellows might be good.

As they grew older she had them trained in all manly exercises and educated in the best manner known in the country. She made herself their frequent companion, and loved to develop in them any traits which she recognized as inherited from her beloved husband. Both Gismondo and Roberto were, as little lads, most charming and attractive. The younger boy had the more impulsive disposition, but was of a sweet nature, and soon showed due sorrow for any hastiness of speech or action.

When both had passed their early boyhood and were to assume some of the responsibilities of their position, Gismondo showed himself all that his mother could desire. Devoted to his home and prepared to fulfil in every way the duties of his position, he yet regretted the near approach of his majority. Roberto, two years younger than his brother, was eager, rather than reluctant, to escape from his mother's authority. For, in spite of her gentleness and affection, her younger son had shown, with

increasing years, a growing impatience of rebuke or restraint, and a fiery indignation whenever his views were opposed or his wishes crossed. On such occasions he would vehemently declare that other youths of his own age had far greater freedom than he, and that he wished he could be in the place of any one of them. His mother's gentle remonstrances and earnest representations that in days to come he would thank her for what now made him so impatient generally sufficed to soothe him, but they were soon forgotten, and a similar outburst would occur.

Gismondi, on becoming master of his estates, set himself to carry out the ideas and principles in which he had been trained, and showed an almost excessive consideration and soberness in his actions. Roberto, on the contrary, was daily becoming more impatient for the day when he would be his own master, and scorned his brother for being so little self-assertive and so careful of usage and customs. At length the happy moment came when he could do as he liked, and he insisted upon having his share of his father's fortune and going away from Turin.

This caused the Lady Constanza much distress, first because it seemed to show that Roberto had but little affection in comparison with his great impatience, and next because she feared that he meant to use his liberty in some foolish or unbecoming way. But in vain she entreated him to stay, or at least to delay his departure, and, hardly concealing his delight, he took farewell of his home. Accompanied by two young companions of much the same discontented disposition as himself, he set out for Rome. There for two years he and his friends made themselves notorious by their extravagant and frivolous manner of life, and then news reached the Lady Constanza that her son had suddenly left Rome and no one knew whither he had gone.

His mother tried to find consolation in the company of her devoted eldest son Gismondo, and the affection and tenderness of his gifted wife and beautiful children. But

often her thoughts roamed longingly after her forgetful and self-seeking Roberto. Amongst her many works of mercy was that of service rendered by a charitable society, which she had founded, to the poor and sick of Turin. Several kindly and pious ladies visited the public hospitals and shelters, and helped and nursed the suffering patients within. One day as she went through one of the poorest of these great buildings, followed by her servant carrying food and clothes, she heard from a low pallet a deep sigh of misery. Pausing, she drew near to find out what more urgent suffering she could relieve. To her horror and dismay she recognized in the upturned face of the person her lost Roberto! He raised his arms, and, bursting into tears, tried to embrace her, but was too weak, and his arms fell back helplessly.

"My son! my son!" cried Lady Constanza, "do I find you thus?" Unable to speak, the wretched young man sobbed, and then fainted from pain and weakness. Immediately his mother sent for the physicians, and ordered his removal to her home, where she nursed him with the utmost tenderness and skill. After a few days he was able to speak connectedly, and asked that his brother Gismondo should be sent for. Then he began the recital of how he had spent the time of his absence. "On reaching Rome I plunged into every kind of extravagance and dissipation, and handed over to my two friends all my affairs, keeping only a few bills of exchange for my personal use. They used my wealth and their own freely, arranging the most splendid parties, the most gorgeous feasts, and the most glittering entertainments that you can conceive. But, my mother, your friends there would not let me alone! Several noble families sent to me, imploring me, for your sake, to discontinue my useless life and give up the senseless extravagance in which I lived. To escape their appeals and reproaches I left Rome and went to Naples.

"There I took one of the finest palaces and entertained the most illustrious society, and set on foot a series of

banquets and amusements so magnificent that their like had never been seen before. But presently the restless life told on me. I became ill, and lay weak and miserable, burnt up with fever, and with a mind as uneasy as my body. Then my two friends and companions visited my bedside to tell me that they had used all the ready money with which I had supplied them. Without suspecting their trick, I gave them my private keys, and asked to be left alone. The next day I found that they had taken ship for England, and, weak as I was, I thought of my escritoire and its contents. Alas! they had taken everything in the form of money or bills of exchange and left me—nothing!

"After some days of misery I applied to various members of the wealthy families who had been my most frequent and riotous guests, but they all had some reason or excuse for not even coming to see me. Soon news was brought that I was heavily in debt for the mansion I was occupying, and that all the furniture and ornaments I possessed would hardly suffice to cover it. When I was on the verge of despair I confided my troubles to one of my physicians, and met with the greatest sympathy and kindness.

"He had me removed to his house, attended me, provided me with every luxury, and nursed me back to health. When I was well enough to travel, he filled my purse and, giving me his blessing, bade me farewell. I reached Bologna in safety, but there I was at once seized with a violent fever, and again for weeks I lay ill, my little money rapidly melting. As soon as I could I set forth again, resolved to make my way home, and yet ashamed to appear before you. Falling ill again, I was carried to the hospital where you, dear mother, like an angel of mercy, found me."

Gismondo and Lady Constanza listened with affectionate sympathy to the story told by their returned wanderer, and uttered no word of blame. Surrounded with every

care, and tenderly loved and cherished, Roberto should have recovered strength and health. But he had endured too great a strain, and soon the physicians had to assure his grieving mother that he was slowly passing away from her. A few months after his return he died peacefully, and was buried in the great tomb of the Landolfi.

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